

A SPANISH PRISONER  
IN A GERMAN CAMP

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VALENTIN TORRAS



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*TWENTY-ONE MONTHS OF CAPTIVITY*

VALENTIN TORRAS

WITH A PREFACE BY  
JACINTO O. PICÓN

OF THE ROYAL SPANISH ACADEMY

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY  
BERNARD MIALL

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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## Dedication

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TO

MY COMPANIONS IN CAPTIVITY AT ZOSSEN-  
BUNSDORF, CHEMNITZ, AND GROSS-PORITSCH

WHO SUFFERED WITH ME, WHO AFFORDED ME  
MENTAL AND MATERIAL COMFORT, AND WHO  
ASSISTED ME TO RECOVER MY LIBERTY, AND  
TO THOSE WHO SENT ME SUCCOUR DURING  
THE TWENTY-ONE MONTHS OF MY CALVARY,  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK OF SUFFERING AND  
HORROR



## PREFACE

MANY books are being published in connection with the tremendous conflict which is drenching Europe with blood; there is an abundance of technical studies, the work of military specialists, and there is no lack of reports and collections of documents compiled by diplomatists, who, having been unable to avoid the war, are now endeavouring to explain its origins; but the books which are looked for and read with the greatest interest to-day, and which to-morrow will constitute invaluable historical data, are those which are rapidly written by men who have taken part in the battles of the war; volumes of few pages, in which we read a plain description of the "thing seen"; such as the *Journal d'un Simple Soldat*,<sup>1</sup> by Gaston Riou, *La Bataille dans la Forêt*, by Jean L  ry, and *Sous Verdun*, by Maurice Genevoix, books which give a complete idea of the reality of marches, life in the trenches, bombardments, attacks upon fortresses, the burning of woods, and all the horrors engendered by the blindness with which one nation claims to impose its hegemony upon the world, and the heroism with which the other nations defend their independence.

<sup>1</sup> An English translation of this volume is published by Messrs. Allen & Unwin.

Such narratives, when they are of French origin, contain accusations which are so tremendous that the mind indignantly revolts against the agents of the crimes reported; but, at the same time, as such pages are written by those who have seen their native country invaded, their temples profaned, their homes pillaged, their fathers butchered, and their women violated, our conscience, eager for impartiality, and our hearts, unwilling to believe in such evil doings, open the way to doubt; and we cannot do less than ask ourselves: "Are these things true—are all these accusations well-founded—are they not the disasters which war brings with it magnified and exaggerated by patriotism?" Then, remembering some our travels, and others our reading, we think of Germany the mother of moralists and philosophers, we recall to our minds the placid romances which picture the family life of Germany as the origin and the school of all the virtues, or the works of the great lyric poets, whose distinctive qualities are sweetness and melancholy, or the works of those immortal musicians who have so often filled us with the spirit of poetry and of tenderness; we think, lastly, of all that modern German science has contributed to progress, of its fight against superstition and error, and we tell ourselves: "No, it is not possible that a people whose soul has shaped philosophers, naturalists, musicians and poets, in order to collaborate, according to its nature, in the civilization of the world, should commit the atrocities which its enemies attribute to it."

It is obvious that whoso has not forgotten the war of 1870 knows that the same accusations were made against the Prussian Army then; we must remember that the Germans, at that period, were sacking cities,

shooting old men and women, and refusing quarter to *francs-tireurs*, inaugurating the absurd theory that the peasantry, in a war of invasion, has no right to defend itself; but half a century has passed since then, and after such a lapse of time a cultured people cannot commit such cruelties without ceasing to be cultured; nevertheless, those who are writing to-day record instances even more aggravated of all such matters as the utter forgetfulness of moderation and contempt for international law; so that it seems natural to resist conviction when the complaints proceed from the injured parties.

In order to convince ourselves that certain narratives are not inspired by hatred it is necessary that those who are responsible for them shall not have taken part in the conflict; that they shall issue from the lips of a neutral, and not only a neutral, but a man who, by reason of the circumstances of his life, and even by reason of his scanty culture, shall be conscious of no reasoned inclination towards accusers or accused. The testimony of a soldier, a professor, or a literary man may be influenced by his ideas, his prejudices, his sympathies; and it will therefore be suspect. On the other hand, that of a poor journeyman, attentive only to gaining his livelihood, with no opportunity of knowing what are the claims of the various nations, born, moreover, of another stock than that of the belligerents, and who, finally, confines himself to relating what he has seen, without commenting upon it—this cannot inspire distrust.

And such a neutral is the author of this book: a plucky, intelligent Spaniard, who used to earn his eight francs a day, and whom the Germans made a prisoner of war, holding him in captivity, with

indescribable obstinacy, for more than twenty months. Such is Valentin Torras.

He has in truth the right to tell what he has suffered, and his manner of telling it, void of all literary pretension, gives a most melancholy idea of the things he has had to suffer. And let it not be said that these are things inevitable to war, for by this vulgar criterion, as by that which attributes certain misdeeds to the rudeness of a past period, there is no crime which cannot be extenuated, no ferocity which cannot be explained away.

If the reader will consider what Torras has seen, and what was done to him, and above all who it was that did it, he will be left saddened by the fact that such things can happen in the midst of a civilized nation.

I feel inclined to the belief that Torras did not, by some misfortune, fall into the hands of regular troops belonging to a European army, but into the hands of warriors drawn from those remote regions where not only are pity and mercy unknown, but where the light of reason and the benefits of culture (without a *k*) are as yet no part of the patrimony of the human race. For to take a man prisoner in the country which is the subject of hostilities, on the supposition that he is a native of that country, is natural; but that this man should prove to be of a different nation, and that those who deprive him of his liberty, who yet belong to an army full of professors and learned men, should not succeed in determining whether he is Spanish or Portuguese, appears wholly incredible. If they had had to deal with one of those adventurers, with a certain veneer of education, who speak three or four languages and are able



to deceive any one who questions them, the matter would have been credible; but it is extremely difficult to believe that the officers and officials of Central Europe were incapable of deciding as to the origin of a poor working-man, who possessed no means or resources to put them off the track. Nevertheless, this is what happened; in the first place those who took Torras into custody were incapable of investigating the matter of his true nationality; afterwards they persisted in regarding him as a Portuguese; finally, persisting in their error, either because they were so unintelligent that they could not understand him, or because they obstinately refused to confess their mistake, they declared him, so to speak, a lawful prize, and treated him as a prisoner of war.

From this moment, what makes us indignant in Torras's narrative is not the lack of intelligence displayed in investigating the matter of his origin, but the manner in which the prisoners of war are treated.

If the reader has a liking for vivid impressions, let him come hither for them; in these few chapters he will see to what lengths cruelty can go; not the cruelty proper to battle, when a man's own danger is his excuse for the fury with which he attacks the nearest enemy; but that other cruelty, which ought to bear an even more abominable name: that inflicted upon defenceless beings.

Popular gatherings which insult the prisoners when their trains pass through the stations; people who resort to the camp where they are huddled together in order to deride them; punishments of the severest kind; veritable forms of torture; filthy lodgings, repulsive food, hunger, misery, even the

refinement of calumny—fabricated news of the captives' wives intended to sow suspicion in the minds of their husbands . . . nothing was lacking. The Inquisition was not more inventive.

All this horrifies us; but the surprising thing is the low level of culture revealed by certain episodes; for example, that of the doctor who used to examine nude Russian prisoners, gazing at them from a distance of fifty feet with the aid of a pair of field-glasses, on account of his fear of contagion.

Other cases of a different nature may be of use to the diplomatic representatives of Spain in connection with their investigations, and one of them is genuinely authentic, since it is described in the Note forwarded by the French Government to the Governments of the neutral countries, and among them to ours, respecting the oppressive treatment of the civil populations of Lille, Tourcoing and Roubaix.

Torras relates that in Gross-Poritsch a Frenchman received a letter from his wife; he supposed it to come from Roubaix, where he had been living with her before the war; yet what was not his surprise when he found that the letter was dispatched from Cologne, and that his wife told him that the Germans had forcibly removed her from Roubaix, with many others, who were required for compulsory labour in the German fields; and having refused to work she had been cast into prison, where she was subjected to a diet of herrings, black bread, and water. Hence, as this instance is considerably anterior to the Note of the French Government, it affords us a datum by which we can judge of the reality of the misdeeds to which that Note refers.

This book of Torras's contains something to

interest our Ambassador in Berlin; it is that part of his narrative where, upon his maintaining that he will not sign the false declaration drawn up by the Germans, a captain says to him :

“ ‘ Then you go back to the cells.’

“ ‘ Let me go, then. But I shall come out again some day, and my Ambassador will know of it.’

“ ‘ Your Ambassador is an obliging person. He will do, as always, what the German Government asks him.’

“ ‘ He will do his duty—he will demand my liberation.’

“ The captain laughed, and ordered that I should be taken back to my cell.”

We should like the representative of Spain to note this dialogue, of which he will not have known until now, since neither the officer nor the captive was able to refer the matter to him. It is certain, on the other hand, the defence of the citizens and the interests of France in Germany being, as they are to-day, in the care of Spain, that the Ambassador will be aware—and in much greater detail than Torras—of all that the latter tells us concerning the tortures of the stake, the knapsack, and the cage, with which the French prisoners are tormented.

Fortunately this book is short: the mind could not for long support the reading of so many horrors, a thousand times more terrible than the descriptions of the most sanguinary battle.

At the end of it one lesson is imprinted on our minds; that which may by misfortune be learned by a people which in philosophical speculation, in scientific experiment, and in industry has arrived at a high degree of progress; and which, notwith-

standing, has succeeded in acquiring neither the notion of Justice nor the conception of Liberty; the lesson, in short, that among the nations, as among individuals, it is one thing to be educated and another thing to possess a moral sense.

JACINTO O. PICÓN.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE INVASION

In Valenciennes—The mobilization—The war—The departure of the troops—The English—Enthusiasm—First rumours—The first Germans—Shooting of civilians—Incidents—I am captured,

I AM going to tell, without literary adornment, as I am a simple working-man, but endeavouring to make my narrative as plain, impartial, and minute as possible, all that has happened to me since the European War began, until, being at last set free, I trod on Spanish soil.

My name is Valentin Torras y Closa. I am a native of Manresa in the province of Barcelona. I am a little over thirty-six years old.

My trade is that of a mechanician. I used to work in Valenciennes, a city in French Flanders, close to the Belgian frontier, in the Cail factory. I was contented. I earned sufficient, they thought a lot of me, and I had already saved some thousands of francs. Who could have told me then that I should proceed from that modest well-being to the horrors of the German war-prisoners' camps?

In Valenciennes there were four or five other Spaniards. I do not know what has become of them—whether they shared my most miserable lot, or whether the enemy respected them.

I used to go to work at Denain every morning, by train from Valenciennes, returning to my lodgings in the afternoon. On Sundays I used to make excursions into the surrounding district, so that the whole countryside was quite familiar to me.

At the end of July alarming rumours were beginning to circulate. The newspapers published short columns of dispatches, in which there was talk of the probability of a conflagration. People discussed the news, but did not seem to be particularly alarmed. The incidents of Agadir and the deserters of Casablanca were recalled, and it was believed that diplomacy would settle the differences which existed. There was work, abundance, prosperity, peace; the summer was magnificent; everything breathed of tranquillity. Belgium, close at hand, was toiling and amusing herself as usual. The *estaminets* were driving a roaring trade. The harvest was excellent. How could we imagine that in a few days the whole region would be traversed by innumerable hostile armies?

In the shops where I was working, the hands, the majority of whom were pacifists, declared that the world would not be so mad as to destroy itself without reason. The best educated recounted the apparent causes of the quarrel, the assassinations at Serajevo, and Austria's ultimatum to Servia. . . . None the less, not even the telegrams containing accounts of the bombardment of Belgrade made them believe that the war was drawing near.

On the 2nd of August the rumble of guns surprised Valenciennes. The people read the mobilization placards and scarcely commented upon them. Many clenched their fists in silence. The women's eyes were moist.

The cafés were crammed full. Thousands of the townsfolk gathered within the gates of the barracks where the 127th regiment of infantry was quartered. It was said that this unit was to leave for the East.

For I ought to say that no one imagined that the neutrality of Belgium was to be violated. There was much talk about the resistance of the Eastern barrier. Maps of Lorraine were asked for at the libraries. In the *estaminets* the proprietors gave lessons in geography to the restless drinkers. I learned that the fortresses of Verdun, Toul, Épinal and Belfort would be attacked by the Germans if the French did not hasten to take the offensive.

I, naturally, shared the opinion of the others. I thought that if things turned out badly I could go into Belgium, a neutral country, with my savings, and wait until the storm was over. And nevertheless it was through Belgium that the thunderbolt was about to be discharged !

On the 3rd of August the Government issued a proclamation in which it was explained that mobilization was not the same thing as war. There was hope yet. All the factories, although deprived of part of their staff, continued to work. The material tranquillity was absolute.

However, on the 4th of August it was known that Germany was declaring war upon France. And the spirit of the people underwent a change. I noticed

that anxiety and restlessness were replaced by a cold determination. *Il faut finir* was heard from every side. It was a phrase which was in every mouth.

The principal factories and business houses of Valenciennes agreed to assist the wives and mothers of the mobilized. This was a praiseworthy measure, and the soldiers set out with easier minds, as they knew that their families would have bread while they were absent.

The 127th regiment left by rail, and was dispatched by all Valenciennes. I did not see this send-off myself, as I was still working, but I was told that it was a moving incident, and it goes without saying that it must have been.

The Germans in Valenciennes who had not left in July—we noted that many of them, those who were of military age, were gradually disappearing in the second half of that month—were given the space of forty-eight hours in order to settle their affairs and return to their country. No one molested them in the very least. Some appeared greatly upset, for their means of livelihood were in Valenciennes.

From the 4th to the 10th absolutely nothing occurred. But the German attack upon Liège caused alarm to many people. Was not the storm going to burst in Lorraine? Did the Germans really think of coming by the north to attack us?

On the 10th General Percin, the military governor of Lille, ordered that all aliens, excepting the Belgians and the English, were to vacate the frontier region of the North and proceed to Saint Loup (Manche). He gave them until the 14th to do this. In view of this I made my preparations for travelling; but a

commission of neutrals went to Lille, conferred with Percin, and obtained the repeal of this provision. Percin agreed that aliens of good conduct who had means of their own or settled work in the business houses of Valenciennes might remain in that city. Only the indigent or those without settled occupation were obliged to proceed to Saint Loup.

On the 18th of August there was great excitement in the city because the English were approaching. They were given a magnificent reception. Flowers were showered upon them; they were given chocolate, tobacco, beer. They were cheered and applauded. Some of them were powerful men, clean-shaved, ruddy, tall, with a calm, good-natured expression. They were admirably equipped. They betrayed no emotion whatever. They created an excellent impression.

Between the 18th and the 20th two divisions of infantry arrived, or more than 30,000 men. The officers, who were very smart, spent money freely. On the 20th they all left for Belgium. Not a single Englishman was seen in Valenciennes again, for after the battle of Mons French's Army retired upon Cambrai.

On the 24th I cycled out to Jacob's Bridge, to the station. I fell in with two companies of the 26th Territorials. The men seemed very exhausted, but not dejected. They confessed to me that they had been retreating since Condé before the pressure of a brigade of 5000 Germans. They spoke of returning in greater force.

When I was back in Valenciennes I spoke of my encounter. No one would believe me. What—the invaders as near as that? None the less, it

was not long before they knew I was telling the truth.

That night the Mayor of Valenciennes addressed the people from a balcony of the municipal buildings. He told them, in brief, that there was no danger, as on the following day there would be 20,000 English in Valenciennes. The worthy gentleman was mistaken. On the following day there were in Valenciennes not 20,000 English, but 40,000 German soldiers. This was not precisely the same thing.

The entry of the Germans into Valenciennes? I shall remember it as long as I live. It was half-past six on the morning of the 25th of August. During the night the roar of guns had been heard in the distance. Suddenly four explosions, almost successive, made us realize that the invaders were arriving. These four shots had been fired at four buildings which were the property of the Postal Administration. They caused material damage, but I do not know if there were any victims.

After this far from comforting advertisement the columns of grey-helmeted men began to go past. The people watched them from behind their windows. There was hardly any one in the streets.

As there was not a soldier in Valenciennes, the Germans did not encounter the slightest resistance. They installed themselves in the public buildings and issued proclamations in a mediocre French, threatening terrible reprisals if they were molested. The population submitted in silence to the laws of war.

At nine o'clock on the morning of this day a frightful tragedy was reported from the outskirts. There is to the south of Valenciennes a village whose popula-

tion is largely agricultural; its name is Quérénaing. It lies at a distance of two miles or so. Here some English stragglers had taken refuge, and a squadron of the 26th Territorials who had lost their way. They were not eighty men in all. The officer who was in charge of them, as German patrols were observed on the high road, emerging from Valenciennes, dragged some carts from the village, and upset them over the railway bridge, so that the Germans, detained by the obstacle, should lose time. I know the place very well. The high road lies below, and the railway above, on an embankment.

The German vanguard arrived. They were followed by batteries of small calibre. The Franco-British forces resisted for a short time under cover of the carts. Then they moved off to Le Cateau, and the Germans did not pursue them seriously.

But a German detachment entered Le Cateau and ascertained the names and addresses of the owners of the carts. These had not fled, for owing to the brief action to which I have alluded, it was not possible to travel on the high road without being struck by the bullets. They remained in the village, waiting until things should become quiet again. And because of this they were lost. The Germans shot them all—twenty men and two women—despite their cries, tears, and supplications. The execution was carried out close to the walls of a château owned by a retired commandant, which stood some hundred yards from the last houses of Quérénaing. Afterwards the whole village was set on fire with astonishing rapidity. The mayor was ill, and unable to leave his bed in time: he was burned to death.

We knew all this in Valenciennes because those



living in the neighbourhood of Quérénaing took refuge in the city, where they were given such succour as was possible. I spoke with one of the fugitives, who told me that he was much surprised that the Germans had respected the château of the retired commandant of whom I made mention.

But two days later this château was pillaged by order of a German colonel, who, if I remember rightly, was called Kentzel, or something like it. All the furniture was placed on motor-cars and sent to Belgium.

On the 25th of August the Mayor of Valenciennes published a proclamation recommending absolute order, so that the city and its inhabitants should not suffer punishment. The advice was sound.

From the 26th of August interminable columns of troops of all arms began to pass through—infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, pontoon detachments, machine-gun companies. It was a human tide, which covered the roads and fields. As I was a neutral, I used to go into the surrounding country to watch the passing of the German armies. I kept very quiet, and the spectacle interested me. Of course, I hoped inwardly for the triumph of France, the country where I was earning my bread, and for which I had an affection.

The German soldiers, when passing through Valenciennes, used to sing their warlike hymns, preferably *Deutschland über alles* and the *Wacht am Rhein*. They used to shout: "We are going to Paris." They appeared to be certain of victory.

One day I was at the door of my lodgings in the Faubourg de Paris. A captain was marching at the head of a company. He looked hard at the name of



the street, and asked me in French, as he passed me :  
“ Is it much further to Paris ? ”

“ A hundred and thirty-six miles, captain,” I replied, astonished.

“ But aren’t we in the suburbs of Paris ? ” he said, pointing at the plate bearing the name of the street.

“ No. We are in Valenciennes,” I said, even more amazed. “ That is the name of the street.”

He shrugged his shoulders in a doubting manner and went away. I went into the house, my mind full of various reflections. I remember, too, that a general, who was said to be a prince, on passing through Valenciennes threw handfuls of German copper coins to the children. “ Now you see Germany is generous ! ” he told them.

All the warehouses were emptied with meticulous care and order. They began the sack with those whose owners had fled, but they soon proceeded to sack the rest. The people, resigned, hoped for the return of the French and their auxiliaries.

It was known that Maubeuge, a frontier fortress, not far from Valenciennes, was holding out against the stubborn siege of the Germans. But on the 7th of September, at one o’clock in the afternoon, some soldiers of the garrison reached the neighbourhood of Valenciennes. They stated that Maubeuge had surrendered, and that they and others had succeeded in escaping. They asked if there were many Germans in Valenciennes. They were told that there was only a detachment of 200 men, but that at every moment German troops were arriving from Belgium.

I estimate that some 2000 men escaped from Maubeuge, with their guns. They took the direction

of Douai. One squadron of them ambushed themselves near Orchies, and made an attack upon an automobile in which a German general was travelling with his aides. The Germans avenged themselves by shooting a number of the inhabitants of the village. They said that the shots had been fired by the villagers, and not by regular soldiers.

About this time, too, the Germans shot the curé of the village of Maing. Maing is close to Valenciennes. The unfortunate man was bicycling along the high road. A sentinel bade him halt. I do not know what followed between them. What is certain is that a patrol brought the priest as a prisoner to the church of Notre Dame of Valenciennes. For two days he was imprisoned in the sacristy of the church. A German Catholic curé used to visit him. It was believed in Valenciennes that nothing would happen, but he was condemned to death for espionage. The unfortunate man asserted that he was going to Valenciennes, when he was captured, in order to make some purchases, and obtain news of various friends. The mayor pleaded for his pardon, but this was refused, and the sentence was carried out.

One afternoon in the Faubourg Poirier I was a witness of the following incident. A German officer was passing, mounted on a bicycle. One of the wheels of the machine gave way, and the officer began to swear in his own language. But he quickly calmed himself. He had seen a boy approaching, vigorously pedalling. He accosted him, forced him to dismount, mounted the bicycle himself, and, leaving his own machine, departed. But the boy began to cry, and to say that the bicycle was not his, that he would

have to pay for it, that he had no money, that his father would beat him. I was trying to console him, when I heard a great clamour. The officer had returned, mounted on the boy's bicycle. I supposed that he had been moved to compassion by the boy's desperation, and was going to return the machine. But what happened was something quite different.

When he was near he shouted in French: "Hold your tongue, Apache!" And he fired a shot from his revolver. The boy fell to the ground. The bullet had traversed one arm. I hastened to help him. Meanwhile the officer made off, still on the bicycle. I have not seen him since.

On the 23rd of September a French aeroplane flew over Valenciennes. Thousands of people ran out into the streets and squares. There was cheering and applause. It was a patriotic delirium, which might have cost them very dear, for the German garrison took alarm, turned out, and levelled its rifles at the groups of people. Some of the "notables" intervened, and no catastrophe occurred. The aeroplane passed out of sight, after dropping four bombs on the railway-station, where there was a movement of German military trains.

Three days later began my misfortunes. On the 26th, at half-past five in the afternoon, I was returning to my lodgings in the Faubourg de Paris. I have not explained that I was lodging, as sole lodger, in the house of a widow.

Scarcely was I shut in my room, where I tumbled into bed, when I heard some one shouting at the street door, and striking violent blows. Without knowing why, I felt greatly alarmed. And there is no doubt that presentiments are a reality.

A German officer entered, accompanied by a patrol. Between him and myself the following dialogue in French took place—

“ You are a mechanician ? ”

“ Yes, sir. I was working in the Cail factory.”

“ Very well. We want you. Come with me.”

“ But why ? ”

“ I am not required to give you explanations.”

“ Excuse me, sir. I am a citizen of a neutral country.”

“ It doesn't signify. We want you to work at the station, where a locomotive repair-shop has been set up.”

“ I cannot obey you. I am Spanish. Spain is not at war with any country. Leave me here. You will find other workmen.”

The officer became enraged. Doubtless he was not accustomed to encounter opposition.

“ You are not a Spaniard,” he shouted, in a rage; “ you are French ! ”

“ I am Spanish and I am going to prove it.”

I opened a trunk and took out my papers. They were all in order.

The officer remained gazing from one document to another.

“ Very well,” he said, at the end of a few moments. “ Let us make an inventory of all this.”

My two trunks were opened; in them I had my clothes, my savings, and a few modest possessions. The whole might have been worth some £180.

The officer dictated and one of the soldiers wrote. Then the former took possession of all my documents, what money I had in my purses, and the inventory, and informed me—

"We are going to send you to your own country by way of Switzerland. We will take you to the station."

"And my luggage?" I said, in some alarm.

"Will be taken to the station too. My men will look after it."

And accordingly we went. I took my leave of the landlady. Fortunately nothing was owing to her. I had given her some money in advance, and she still had some of it in hand.

We went on foot through the streets of Valenciennes and arrived at the station. The soldiers followed with the two trunks.

It was already night when we went on to the platform. The officer left me in charge of his men and went off with my documents.

A long time went by. The trunks had been placed side by side against a wall. I, sitting on a bench, was thinking that I should soon find myself in Spain.

My conscience did not accuse me of having done wrong in refusing to repair locomotives for the Germans. In the first place, I was a Spaniard, and the Germans could not legally compel me. Moreover, I hated the idea of undertaking anything against France, a country in which I had gained a comfortable living.

Finally, I believed, like everybody else, that there would be peace by the end of the year. I wanted to retain my post as mechanic in the Cail factory. But if the people of Valenciennes were to see me slaving for the Germans, helping them in the task of repairing locomotives, they would hate me, would regard me as an enemy, and when peace came life

would be made impossible for me, not only in the city, but in the entire district.

I was thinking of all these things when two officers approached me. One of them was the who had presented himself that evening at my lodgings. The other I did not know.

The first pointed me out with his finger and spoke a few words to the other in German; these, of course, I did not understand. At the same time he gave him a paper.

“And my papers? And my luggage?” I said.

“All will be returned to you at the Swiss frontier. Follow the Herr Offizier,” replied the officer who had made me prisoner that evening.

And he moved off with long strides. Then he turned, and shouted to me, in an ironical tone: “*Bon voyage!*”

He disappeared in the shadows which filled a great part of the station. I never saw him again. I do not know his name, or if he is still alive.

The other officer ordered me to follow him, and we got at once into a passenger train which was quite empty and was about to start. We took no tickets, nor were they needed. No one asked us for them.

I was not at all alarmed. I was convinced that on the following day at latest I should be in Switzerland.

Nevertheless, I was worried about my trunks, and asked the officer what had become of them.

“Your trunks?” he replied. “I know nothing about them. My comrade will have seen to them.”

The train started. At each station there was a stoppage of some hours. I was hungry and thirsty, but did not dare to move. Worn out, at length I fell

asleep. When I awoke it was already day, and I was at Mons. The officer had left the carriage. From one of the windows I looked all over the station for him. I had to find him again, as he had my papers and I was left without resources.

## CHAPTER II

### ZOSSEN-BUNSDORF

At Mons—The Belgians—The officer reappears—To the prisoners' train—Useless protests—A horrible journey—Taken to the camp—First impressions of captivity—Friendship—What we had to endure—Disappointment—At Chemnitz.

THE station at Mons was full of life and movement. There were various trains, made up and full of people. At every moment men, women and children emerged on to the platforms, carrying baskets and bottles. They went up to the trains and distributed chocolate, cigarettes, fruit, drinks, and pastry. For these trains were full not of Germans, but of French, English and Belgian prisoners, some wounded and others whole.

Near the doors was a great show of military force, and sentries abounded in every corner.

The din was terrible—the shouting and calling, the slamming of doors and the giving of orders. From time to time a convoy of German troops passed through the station without stopping, like a flash of lightning. The soldiers were singing in chorus. Many of them, with red faces and glistening eyes, stared at us from the carriage windows and made gestures at us. I still seem to see all this in a vague sort of way. Ah, that was a morning never to be forgotten !

Suddenly I felt some one touch me on the shoulder,



and I turned round. It was my officer, who had entered the carriage without my seeing him.

"Come with me," he said.

"Are we going to get into another train?"

"Yes, another train."

"Is it going to Switzerland? And my luggage?"

"Hold your tongue and obey."

"But . . ."

"Don't ask any more questions."

I got out and started to walk through the station. My surprise was enormous when, pointing to one of the trains full of prisoners and wounded men, the officer resumed—

"Get in there."

"Why here? But this is a military train!"

"Get in at once!"

I protested. At that moment the idea of captivity presented itself to my mind.

"I shall not get in if my papers are not returned to me, and my trunks, which contain what money I possess."

"Get in, accursed Frenchman!"

"I am not French! I am Spanish! This is an outrage!"

People began to gather round us. The officer was growing red in the face, and was looking at me in such a way that I took a few steps backwards, thinking he was about to attack me.

Probably he thought I was meditating escape, for he said something in German, in a very loud voice, and almost instantaneously I was surrounded by soldiers armed with rifles.

Hoarse with shouting, I resisted, struggling. The officer disappeared amid a group of people, carrying

my papers with him. From that horrible moment I was nobody. I could not prove my individuality. I was lost.

A *feldwebel* seized me by one arm and pushed me toward the open door of a wagon. Several soldiers led me up to it in the twinkling of an eye and threw me in. When I recovered from my amazement the door was closed. Two sentinels, with drawn bayonets, stood motionless on the platform outside.

And at that moment the train began to move. Hardly had we crossed the points when fields and villages began to fly past.

I looked about me. I found myself in one of those trucks which in France and Belgium are dedicated to the transport of cattle. The train consisted, as I afterwards learned, of fifty such trucks.

It contained some fifty persons, what with Belgian and French civilians and wounded soldiers of both nations. These were lying or reclining on straw stained with blood. They had only received first aid. Many seemed to be drowsy, and fever was devouring them. Others were talking nervously and relating their experiences of the war without any one asking them to do so. The majority never ceased asking for water, but we had none. They were given a few draughts of beer, which was almost warm, and did not appease their constant thirst.

The doors had been locked from outside and the train was like a vast rolling prison. This was almost the very phrase uttered by a well-dressed Belgian, who wore gold spectacles. He said—

“We are in a travelling prison.” It was the truth.

The civilians who were in the wagon could not

understand the reason of their imprisonment or their journey. They had been dragged out of their homes; they had not been given time to take leave of their families, and they did not know what the Germans wanted with them. Several were from Valenciennes. I knew some of them, and told them my adventures. They told me that I should undoubtedly be set at liberty, as the Germans would not venture to commit an outrage upon a foreign subject.

The train travelled at a tortoise pace. It stopped at every station, and waited while interminable convoys of troops went by, all destined for France.

"They are failing," affirmed a wounded man, rousing himself.

"Yes?" I replied.

"Yes. I was at the Marne. I saw the end of it. I was wounded on the Aisne, near Craonne, in an attack upon a height. The Germans took me prisoner."

He went on talking. All listened to him in silence. Then I learned that there had been a great battle in Champagne, and that the Germans had retreated toward the north. In Valenciennes we had not received the slightest news of such a memorable success.

Evening fell, and the interminable journey continued. The Germans took no notice of us. A large escort travelled in the train. From time to time an officer ran along a platform with long strides, looking into all the wagons from the outside, one by one, as though passing them in review.

We might have died of hunger but for the charity of the Belgians, who, whenever it was possible, flocked to the stations and gave us cold meat, sweetmeats, and fruits. The wounded men did not want to eat; they begged for water, refreshments, and ice. They were

burning. Inside the wagon, despite the open windows, the temperature was that of an oven.

The night drew on. As the wounded men occupied the greater part of the space, the unwounded still remained standing, in the most uncomfortable postures. I was dripping with sweat. I think I slept in that position for some time.

During the night four German sentries were placed in each wagon. They were territorials, or *landsturm*, as they call them in Germany. The four in my wagon wore eye-glasses or spectacles. They seemed sad and despondent. On the following day they were relieved by four like them.

We arrived in Liége on the evening of the second day. They gave us a by no means appetizing soup, composed of a broth resembling dirty water, in which some indefinable substances were floating. They displayed no magnificence as to the service. There were fifty wagons in the train, as I have said. So they distributed fifty metal plates, one for each wagon. From each plate, and without spoons, fifty men had to dine in turn.

I did not want the soup, not only because it looked to me to be extremely filthy, but because I was accustomed to eat out of my own plate. I suppose the same thing occurred to the others. Nevertheless, a number did eat. They observed that the soup warmed the stomach, after all.

The sick men begged that their dressings should be renewed. Some declared that they would fall victims to gangrene. An officer promised them that the German military ambulance people would look after them. But no one came.

We passed the night in Liége station. Our wagon

was an inferno and a privy. The insupportable odour of excrement and urine and vomit, of the sweat of so many human bodies, of infected wounds, made us sick and stupefied. Some of the soldiers were crying. Others, maddened by fever, were singing *La Brabançonne* or the *Marseillaise*. The sentries ordered them to be silent. They, delirious, raved in a way that filled me with horror.

The hours went by but the train did not move. We could see nothing, save trains which came and went almost without stopping. Sometimes the platforms were covered with German soldiers. At others they remained almost empty, and we could see only the sentries, or some officer who was hurrying along, and who quickly disappeared through a doorway or behind a row of wagons.

At dawn our convoy resumed its journey. We crossed the German frontier at a point which they afterwards told me is called Herbesthal.

"Now begins the worst of all!" affirmed an old Frenchman. "We have left Belgium and are entering Germany. Now there's an end of refreshments and cigars and sweets and chocolates. Now the insults will begin!"

He turned out to be a prophet. Nevertheless, in a station whose name I do not know, occurred an incident which comforted us greatly.

Our convoy had been halted, and for a few moments a military train full of recruits from Alsace drew up on the next track. They did not look particularly happy. As we were quite close to them conversations were struck up, in French, from window to window. They told us that they came from Nancy, where they had been repulsed. They were going to

Champagne, according to what their officers said. Some of them unbuttoned their uniforms when they observed that none but we could see them. Underneath they wore civilian clothes of thin cloth. One exclaimed—

“ At the first chance I shall go over to the French ! ”

They presented us with food, and even some sealed bottles of Alsatian wines. With the Alsatians there were Lorrainers, who showed themselves less effusive, and sometimes advised the others to be prudent. Truly these Alsatians were too emphatic in their Francophile manifestations. As one of us pointed out to them an officer who was about to peep in at a window, in another compartment of their train, a ruddy-faced boy, who had given us cigars, said, shrugging his shoulders—

“ What can he do to us ? What if they shoot us ? In any case we are going to our death.”

I ought to say that the rest of the military trains which we passed during our long journey into Germany were full of young soldiers who displayed an ardent enthusiasm. They were singing and cheering, and when they learned who we were they shouted—

“ We are going to Paris ! ”

A Belgian beside me murmured, after one of these trains had passed—

“ None of them know what has happened on the Marne. They believe they can get into Paris. That's impossible already.”

Nevertheless, I, witnessing so much ardour, did not feel that things were going well.

While we were passing through the fields we were not so dejected, though very often the old men, women and boys who were working in them shook

their fists at us and threw potatoes at us. But in the stations there were always groups of the common people who saluted us with a tempest of insults. I did not understand their language, but some of the Belgians did. And they translated the insults. They were calling us cowards, traitors, filthy beasts, etc. Naturally we did not answer them. We made as though we did not hear their offensive language.

On reaching Cologne we were once more locked into the wagons. The sentries went away and we were left alone. We thought they would give us food, but we were mistaken. After a two hours' stop we resumed our journey. We were able in Cologne to make one observation. In one of the streets close to the station we saw four hanging effigies, suspended from balconies, like the figures of Judas which from Easter to Whitsuntide are hung by the neck from the lanterns in certain cities of Spain. But these effigies represented French soldiers. One wore the uniform of a soldier of the line. Another represented a soldier of an Alpine regiment, with his bonnet; a third a Zouave, and a fourth an artilleryman.

And so we continued to travel through Germany, day and night. I remember the journey as a horrible nightmare. The 28th, 29th and 30th went by. They gave us no food or water. They gave no ease to the wounded. They did not allow us to clear the wagon of the human dejecta and the putrefying blood which covered the floor. We were dying of heat and nausea. I am a working-man, accustomed to a hard life, and with plenty of physical endurance. As well for me. On the night of the 30th of September I believed I was dying. Debility, heat, fatigue—we were still unable to sit down—the spectacle of the agony of



those poor soldiers, delirious, devoured by gangrene, the evil stench, the indignation which I felt at the outrage of which I was a victim, all together caused me to be attacked by a sort of collapse which my companions believed mortal. They placed me on one side, with the dying. Nothing could be done for me. The provisions and the bottles of various beverages which the charitable Belgians had given us were exhausted. All were resigned, hoping for death, which would release them from this torment.

In normal times the journey from Cologne to Berlin was a matter of a few hours. But our train had to leave the line clear for all the others, whether military, passenger, or goods trains. We grew desperate in the stations. The hours went by and we did not move, and we began to think our Calvary would never end.

When I recovered from my swoon some of my companions told me that according to one of the *landsturm* who were guarding us—when we left Cologne they again placed four sentries in each wagon—we were nearing the capital of Germany.

And indeed at three in the morning we passed through Berlin. It was the 1st of October.

In the train itself they gave us coffee with milk, a piece of bread smeared with butter, and a plate of stew for each one of us. We begged for water. They gave us a bucket, which we emptied in a moment, and as we were many and the water very scanty we were left as thirsty as before.

The train resumed its journey, and at five o'clock in the morning we arrived at Zossen-Bunsdorf.

We alighted from the train. Many could not stand on their feet. Some of the wounded were motionless.



I do not know how many died; I was unable to find out. I know only that as many of us as were not seriously wounded were formed up in military fashion, and that the others were left in the wagons for the time being. I suppose they were taken to some hospital.

We passed through the town between files of soldiers—men of mature age. We were escorted also by some police. All were silent, and there was no one in the streets. We saw only a woman at the door of a baker's shop, who stared at us for a long time, making signs of astonishment.

In a cart, which took us through very flat fields, we reached the camp which was allotted to us.

It was a vast, bare, sandy space, some 1200 yards wide, and almost quadrangular. It was contained within very high wire fences, which bristled with barbs. The *Kommandantur* had been installed in a small isolated house, where a barber lived.

There were no barracks, nor canvas tents, nor anything whatever besides the wire fences and the earth. And on the earth more than 15,000 men, French, English, Russians and Belgians, were sleeping or beginning to grow restless.

I was horrified to see no buildings. So these thousands of unhappy soldiers had nowhere to shelter themselves? So that if it rained the floods of the heavens drenched them, and if the sun shone they could not shield themselves from his rays?

And here I was about to live, unknown, forgotten, far from my country? A terrible anguish oppressed my heart. I thought of death. . . .

But presently a hope suddenly entered my mind. Germany was a civilized nation. I, a neutral citizen,

ought to be respected. I would complain, I would obtain justice, I would return to my country. . . .

We were passed in review. Each of us was given a pewter plate, a soup ladle, and a blanket, and we were told that we must arrange ourselves as we could.

The camp was waking up to life and movement. The prisoners were getting up, and making, as best they could, their morning toilet. Presently groups of men gathered together, discussing this or that, or strolling to and fro, much jostled by the barbed wire fences—for in the centre movement was impossible, owing to the crowd—trying to see what was happening outside the enclosure.

Many emerged from the most curious dug-outs, which they had excavated in the sand, utilizing plates and spoons for the purpose. These dug-outs, which were like molehills, belonged as a rule to a group of four or five. They appeared to make them by collecting that number of men, almost always of the same nationality. Some dug with spoons and plates, and others carried the sand away. The work lasted some days. The right of the partners to their burrow was scrupulously respected. There were never disputes about the matter.

Nevertheless, only a few hundreds of the prisoners had subterranean shelters. The majority slept in the open air, *à la belle étoile*, as a professor of the Sorbonne styled it, with whom I made friends later on.

The dinner that day—Friday—was not so bad as I expected. It is true that as time went on it became worse. It was worse in each successive camp. I have been in Zossen, Chemnitz, and Gross-Poritsch. In this last place those who had no money died of

hunger. But we shall arrive at these details later : they are still present to my mind.

The majority of the French and Belgians and all the English ate at the canteen, since they had money. Many lent money to the poorer. There was a real fraternity in the camp. The Russians were the most unfortunate. Scarcely one of them possessed a centime, and they had to content themselves with the mess.

This consisted of coffee for the morning, rice, lentils, or peas at one o'clock in the afternoon, and soup at night. The bread was scanty and very bad. Sometimes a few barely perceptible pieces of meat appeared in the rice. At the beginning of my stay this meat was beef or mutton. Some weeks went by, and according to what our warders told us it was salted dog.

That same Friday, as soon as I was able, I made a complaint at the *Kommandantur*.

The commander of the camp, a somewhat elderly officer, heard me in silence. He spoke French well, a language which I speak fluently.

"I am a Spaniard," I told him. "I have been the victim of an outrage which I suppose was due to a mistake. They must set me at liberty before long. I cannot prove my identity because they took all my papers from me at Valenciennes."

He replied that he would make inquiries. Four or five days later he summoned me to the *Kommandantur*, and hardly had I entered his presence when he spoke to me severely as follows—

"I know who you are. You are French. You are trying to deceive me. You are a Frenchman from Valenciennes. The whole story you told me is a pure

imposition. But a German soldier is not easily deceived."

I protested with energy, but he shook his head in denial.

I begged him to allow me to write to the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin, and negotiate with him.

"It is possible that you know Spanish," he replied. "But that proves nothing. There are Germans as well who know it, but they are Germans none the less."

And as I continued to protest he called to a soldier and ordered him to remove me and to take me to the camp, which he did with the worst grace in the world.

During these days I struck up a friendship with two French prisoners, a sergeant and a private. The sergeant had been a departmental inspector in the warehouses of the Bon Marché in Paris. The soldier was an advocate, and highly cultivated, as far as I could judge. Both had money. As I had not a franc at my disposal, since the officer who captured me in Valenciennes had left nothing in my pockets, they, out of compassion, and so that I should not eat at the mess, used to invite me to the canteen. Accordingly I had precisely the same food as they had.

One afternoon they proposed to me that I should help them to make an excavation. The nights were beginning to be extremely cold, and it rained often.

Naturally I accepted the proposal with pleasure. I had noticed that close to the encampment a number of workmen were constructing a big barracks, and we begged these workmen to lend us two spades. With these and our spoons and plates we set to work.

The work lasted three days. We began by digging a pit some five feet in depth. Then we excavated a gallery which originated at the bottom of the pit,

and then sloped upward until it reached the surface of the earth.

To enter the dug-out we got into the pit. Then we entered the gallery on our hands and knees. We used to stretch ourselves out and sleep in it, very uncomfortably, but always more regardful of the inclemency of the weather than of fresh air.

Then began a very trying spell of stormy weather. It rained daily. The pit filled with water. We tried to empty it with our plates, but we very seldom managed to do so. And we had to get into the muddy water in order to gain our molehill. Sometimes a standing pool formed at the entrance to the gallery, and the water, forming a rivulet, flooded the latter. And then we had to wake up and make haste to escape.

Moreover, there was always a danger that the roof of the gallery, which was not supported by anything, should fall in and asphyxiate us. There had already been some accidents of this kind, so that when we lay down we were never certain of sleeping.

Half-way through October the Commandant summoned me and informed me that they were going to send me to Switzerland, as it had been discovered in Berlin that I was speaking the truth. Wild with delight, I begged him for permission to take leave of my two friends. Smiling ironically, he granted it. They were greatly delighted by my good fortune, and gave me letters for their families.

A soldier took me from the camp. He led me to a house in the fields, isolated in the midst of a dreary plain, about a thousand yards from the barbed-wire fence. It was a prison. To my great surprise and indignation they shut me in a very filthy little room which contained one small window near the roof, and

a piece of matting on the floor. You can imagine my rage and indignation. I shouted and beat upon the door, but all was useless. A sentinel was marching to and fro, with shouldered rifle, in the passage of the house.

When I made much noise he uttered, in a harsh voice, some words in German, which must have been threats. But I did not listen to him. I would gladly have asked him to shoot me, so great was my anger and misery.

I was there for two days. They gave me dinner in a plate, always the same, which I could not wash, nor scour with sand, as was done in the camp.

When forty-eight hours had elapsed they came for me and took me back to the camp. My French friends were amazed to see me again, since they believed me to be in Switzerland.

But a few remarks of theirs gave me the key of the mystery.

On the day following my imprisonment the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin visited the camp, Señor Polo de Bernabé. As you know, he is in charge of the interests of France and Russia in Germany while the war lasts.

He went quickly through the camp. A Portuguese, called Tonio Antuan, who was kept there as unjustly as I was—I know this because he used to work in Valenciennes, in a steel-works, if I remember rightly—went up to him and begged him to give a letter to the Portuguese Minister in Berlin. Señor Polo told him that he would fulfil his commission, but warned him that as his country and Germany were not on friendly terms, it was possible that his complaint would produce no effect.

This Portuguese disappeared from the camp later on in a somewhat peculiar manner. Further on I shall tell how the Germans persisted, at Chemnitz, in passing me off as this man. This was one of the most extraordinary episodes of my captivity. Even now I cannot fully understand it. What became of this unfortunate man? Is he still alive? I think not, but I cannot be sure.

"If we had known that you were a prisoner," said my friend the sergeant, "we should have reported the matter to the Spanish Ambassador, even at the risk of suffering punishment; but as we believed you were free . . ."

After this painful excitement a monotonous existence began for me, in which my physical suffering appeased my mental torments. I do not know if I am expressing myself clearly. I mean that the rains, the cold, the damp, the filth, and the nocturnal suspense gave me no time to brood over my misfortunes. I believe that it was better so, for otherwise I might perhaps have gone mad.

I had been given the uniform of the prisoners of war, with its armlet, on which was displayed, in large letters, the German word which indicated the unhappy situation of him who bore it. But I had no change of linen. What I was wearing was falling to pieces and was very dirty. And the worst of it was, there was no water in the camp save what fell from the skies. They gave us a little—a ration—to drink. How could we waste it on improving our appearance? When it rained very heavily small puddles formed; those nearest to them profited by them to wash face and hands or to steep a shirt in it.

At the end of October or early in November some



soldiers, who were barbers, applied for an authorization to buy razors and scissors in Zossen, and to exercise their calling in the camp. They obtained permission, and erected open-air barbers' shops. The prisoners, who had beards and mops of hair like those of savages, took turns to be shaved and have their hair cropped.

At this time a big barracks was built close to one of the sides of the camp, and 400 wounded prisoners were lodged in it. I asked to see it one day, saying that a friend of mine was among them. It was very bad. The beds were on the floor. The wounded men told me that they received hardly any attention, and that all the medicines in the dispensary consisted of a few packets of carbolic gauze, some tincture of iodine, and some tar lozenges.

This hospital had to serve for the prisoners who fell ill in camp.

The 15,000 or 16,000 men confined there were divided into companies of 250. Each company was commanded by a German officer. We were guarded by about a thousand soldiers of the *landsturm*, most of whom had the tempers of devils. Their most frequent action was to strike us with their clubbed rifles. They struck me thus twice during my stay at Zossen. Both times it was because I approached the wire fence more closely than appeared proper to my warders.

I ought to say that these same soldiers who used to strike us and at every moment favoured us with the worst adjectives in the German vocabulary, used, for a slight remuneration, to buy things for us in the canteen if we asked them to do so. They never refused, and appeared greatly pleased when we entrusted our commissions to them. I am of opinion that



they did not consider that they were doing anything wrong in striking us. I believe, too, that they did not realize that they were committing an unworthy action in insulting us. They were so accustomed to being beaten and loaded with insults by their own officers and non-coms. ! But we, and above all the French, Belgians and English, were used to a different sort of life, even during the period of military service. The box on the ears, the kick, the push, and the curse seemed to us to be abominable insults to our dignity as men. More than the bodily pain we felt the moral suffering, which was sharper. I know the two clubbings I received caused me outbursts of rage, and that on each occasion I was feverish for some days.

Many of the people of Zossen used to come to see us, and this was not the least of our torments, for so far from pitying us, they used to make annoying and insulting remarks, and they used to make certain waggish gestures with their hands which filled us with fury. However, there were a few exceptions. I remember a married couple consisting of a German husband and a French wife who took pity on our lot, and on several occasions gave us back numbers of French newspapers, purchased in Berlin, which arrived by way of Switzerland.

I was at Zossen-Bunsdorf until the 18th of December. On that date I was transferred to another prisoners' camp, and began the second term of my captivity.

## CHAPTER III

### CHEMNITZ

The journey—First impressions of Chemnitz—My protest—The motive revealed—"You are a Portuguese!"—A bayonet-thrust—In the cells—Four horrible days—French and Russian prisoners—Carrots—The epidemic—Forced labour—No canteen—Musical clubs—Italy enters the war—News—The register—A Portuguese again—Deaths.

ON the 18th of December the order reached the *Kommandantur* to remove a thousand civilians from the camp and send them to Chemnitz. At Zossen we were a mixture of civilians and soldiers. The civilians were Belgians and French from the North and East.

A list was formed, and I was included therein. I took leave with tears in my eyes of my two good friends, who had helped me so much in my captivity, and joined the large group of those chosen, which was forming in a corner of the camp.

We went in column formation to the station, but we discovered that there were not sufficient wagons to transport us.

In view of this we were marched back to another camp not far from Zossen. It consisted of thirty or forty large barrack-rooms. These were empty.

We slept there, on straw, and on the following day, as the necessary wagons had arrived, we took train from Zossen station to Chemnitz.

The journey lasted from nine in the morning to half-past eleven at night. We passed through interminable and extremely gloomy woods. In the stations there were numbers of soldiers, but few civilians.

We were given no food all day, nor water either. For that matter, it was the custom to treat prisoners in this way.

I remember we passed through Dresden at four in the afternoon. We were a long while waiting for the line to be clear so that we could continue our journey.

In the station at Chemnitz we were met by soldiers with tar torches, accompanied by police dogs. Great precautions had been adopted so that we should not be able to escape. We had to go about a mile and a quarter on foot, from the station to the camp.

Through the streets of the suburbs of Chemnitz, through thousands of women and children who stared in silence as we passed, and who were parted by a few policemen whose duty it was to keep order, we made for the outskirts of the town, and soon reached our destination.

This was an artillery barracks, almost completed, and enormous. We had previously been divided into companies.

We were received—with very bad manners, it is true, but already this detail did not shock me—by an elderly German captain, who told us that we must immediately surrender the weapons which we had in our pockets!

Weapons! . . . He cannot have thought we had suffered many inspections! We stared in stupefied amazement. A Frenchman was the first to speak;

he explained to the captain that we had already been three months in captivity.

The captain flew into a rage.

"You are lying!" he shouted, with an insolent gesture. "You come from the East!"

The Frenchman, with great politeness, observed that the officer was making a mistake.

"A mistake! I!" roared the irascible old man (he was at least seventy years old). "I am incapable of making a mistake!"

"Heavens!" exclaimed another Frenchman, boldly, "no one, not even a German captain, is infallible!"

But the captain was not convinced.

"I received notice that a thousand civilians from the East of France were arriving at the Chemnitz camp. My superiors always speak the truth. And you are trying to deceive me!"

We decided to hold our tongues. After all, it was all the same to us.

We were searched, and, naturally, no weapons were found in our pockets.

We had had nothing to eat or drink for twenty-four hours, but this did not worry the old captain. Notwithstanding our complaints, he ordered that we should be locked into the barrack-rooms without delay. There we stretched ourselves out on the straw. At least we were under cover, not as we were at Zossen.

The following day was Sunday, and I had to wait till Monday. I wanted to complain afresh. The old captain did not inspire me with much confidence. Nevertheless, I should lose nothing by trying.

On Monday, in the morning, the captain came down to the barrack-rooms which served us as lodging.

Directly I saw him I hastened towards him and, without further preamble, I said—

“Señor officer, I am here owing to a mistake. I am a Spaniard. I ask to be set at liberty.”

He gazed at me in surprise. Then, putting his hands behind his back—a gesture which he made when the matter in hand was a serious one—he replied—

“I will make inquiries. Be off.”

On the 6th or 7th of January (I do not exactly recall the date) I was sent for and made to go into an office. I was received by a German officer who was seated behind a table. He bore a French name—D’Avignon.

He was well known to the prisoners who were sent to Chemnitz for any time.

He asked me drily who I was, and what was my country, my name, and that of my parents, my age, etc.

Suddenly he became irritated. I suspect this anger was feigned. He wanted, no doubt, to intimidate me. But my Calvary at Zossen had cured me of fear.

“You are a Portuguese mountebank!” he shouted, in a voice of thunder. “Your name is not what you say!”

“I a Portuguese!” I exclaimed, in astonishment.

This was too much for me. I had expected anything but this.

“You are making a mistake,” I insisted. “I am a Spaniard, a Catalan, a native of Manresa. Let me write to the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin. You will see how everything will be cleared up. Let me also write to my parents, who must certainly be greatly alarmed.”

But D'Avignon had a plan. Without noticing my request he took from a locker a document in the German language, with printed paragraphs and a portion written by hand. It was all complete; it only needed a signature—mine. Even the current date had been added.

“Sign this!” he ordered.

“I do not sign what I don't understand.”

“I am going to translate it for you.”

And in bad French, with a great deal of searching for words, he read me the whole precious document.

The upshot of it was that I was not Valentin Torras, a Spaniard, a native of Manresa, but the Portuguese subject known as Tonio Antuan, of whom I have spoken in the last chapter.

This alarmed me extraordinarily. If they created a civil status for me according to their own liking I was lost without remedy. I determined to die rather than sign such a falsehood, which might have been my ruin.

“I am not Tonio Antuan, but Valentin Torras,” I said firmly. “I am not Portuguese, but Spanish.”

“You are Portuguese, and you are going to sign now at once!” he shouted.

And seizing a stylograph he held it out to me, while he rose to his feet.

I took a leap backwards, and leaned against the wall. I gazed about me, seeking a weapon. He noted that I was placing myself on the defensive, and called to a soldier, who hurried up solicitously, with fixed bayonet.

He quickly took two steps towards me, still with the stylograph in one hand and his revolver in the other.

"Sign or I will have you shot!" he shouted. The veins of his neck had swollen up. He was crimson.

"I will not sign! Kill me!" I replied, beside myself.

And I sought to leave that office, where I was passing through one of the bitterest moments of my life.

He violently threw the stylograph down on the table, and said something in German to the soldier.

I do not know what order he gave him. What I do know is that the soldier turned to me, like an automaton moved by a spring, and thrust at my throat with his bayonet.

I made a movement, and the point of the weapon struck me sideways, not in the throat but in the neck. A rush of blood issued from the wound.

I drew back, screaming. I do not know what I said. Neither could they understand me. I was cursing them in Catalan.

D'Avignon took himself off without a word. The soldier seized me brutally by the shoulders and began to take me to a cell where there was a heap of straw. With a push he threw me upon it, and locked the door, leaving me alone and almost in the dark.

The blood kept running over my chest, shoulders, and back. I felt it leaving me, and believed that my last moment had come. I thought of my parents, of Catalonia, of Spain. Then I felt a pain like a pricking in the wound, and my sight gradually grew dim and I lost consciousness.

How many hours was I unconscious? I do not know. Little by little I came to myself. The first

sensation I remember was the pain of the bayonet-thrust. I felt the wound. It was no longer bleeding. The blood had coagulated, forming a sort of plug, to which some of the straw had adhered. I tried to move my head, but it cost me a great effort. All that side of the neck was considerably swollen.

I had a burning thirst. I tried to speak, but only inarticulate sounds issued from my throat. I rose to my feet, after some fruitless attempts.

I approached the door and listened. The steps of a sentry resounded slowly on the floor of a long passage close by.

I struck the door, but no one came.

Hopeless, I stretched myself out on my blood-stained straw bed, waiting for death.

"They want me to bleed to death and die here like a dog," I thought, with more rage than sorrow. "My end is a question of hours."

The night came. I could not hear the sentry's footsteps, and I slept.

I slept a long time, doubtless until daybreak at one stretch. But my sleep was disturbed by horrible nightmares. I saw D'Avignon, with the stylograph in his hand, trying to force me to sign. I saw the soldier pursuing me with his rifle. I saw blood. But this blood ran through the office of the German officer, and covered the whole floor, and presently rose to my breast, and then to my throat, and entered my mouth.

My thirst awaked me. I was not hungry, but I felt a raging need to drink cold water. My tongue was glued to my palate. I found it impossible to salivate. During my captivity in Germany I suffered two torments: that of thirst and that of hunger.



And I can swear that the former is far more unendurable than the latter. Above all when one is wounded as I then was.

I crept to the door, as I could not walk, and beat upon it with hands and feet. After a time a bolt was shot back and a soldier came in. He stared at me in surprise. He said something which I could not understand, and went out, turning to lock me in carefully.

The door opened again. The same soldier left on the straw a dish full of a kind of cold soup, and a piece of black bread.

"Water! Water!" I begged in German, since I knew the word.

He returned in a short time with a sort of can, half full of water.

I snatched at it and I drank it all, greedily. It was muddy enough, and the taste of it was not very pleasant, but to me it seemed pure, cool and crystalline. It filled me with life.

I recovered my strength, and got on my feet, and when the soldier had gone I began to think. My whole neck was swollen and the wound caused me a great deal of pain. But I thought that since they were giving me water, bread, and soup, they did not yet want me to die. I decided, then, to do all I could to live. And I ate the bread and soup.

I was four days in that cell. Every morning a soldier brought in my daily allowance, and the door was not opened again until the following day.

As my neck pained me more and more I feared that gangrene would supervene. I thought of making a great disturbance, of knocking on the walls, of attacking the soldier, of doing, in short, everything

possible to make them take me out of the cell, when on the afternoon of the fourth day an extremely surly *feldwebel* entered my cell, ordered me to follow him, and led me to a barrack-room in which were some of my travelling companions.

I begged him to get me sent to the infirmary. Whether he did not understand French, or whether he had received orders to the contrary, the fact is that he said "*Nein, nein!*" and went off without turning his head.

My companions surrounded me and asked me what had happened during my absence. I told them my painful adventures, and they congratulated me on escaping with my life. One of the Frenchmen, who understood medicine, although he was not a doctor, undertook to look after me. He went to the infirmary and asked for lint and tincture of iodine. For six weeks he dressed my wound every morning. Gradually the swelling on my neck went down. The wound closed up, and all that is left of it is an indelible cicatrix.

I have hardly spoken of our installation at Chemnitz. I am now going to relate how we lived in this prisoners' camp.

There were immense stables in the barracks. They were vast galleries divided into compartments by partitions of wood and canvas. Each compartment, originally intended for four horses, was occupied by sixteen men.

When we arrived there were some 4000 prisoners there, who slept on straw which was trodden almost to dust and full of parasites. This straw was a factor of infection of the first order, but there was no way of obtaining any more. The old captain replied,

when we complained, that it was much too good for a lot of French loafers like ourselves.

In the opinion of this officer all Frenchmen were Apaches. He not only said this; I believe he was convinced of it.

Presently some thousand Russians arrived. They came from the Carpathians. Some spoke a French gibberish. They told us that in a fortnight's journey they had been given food only three times. Hungry, thirsty, ragged, and filthy, they inspired a feeling of compassion.

The food consisted of 300 grammes of whole-meal bread, of a dark greyish tint; coffee with sugar or honey, and a plate of some indescribable soup, which, I remember, always turned my stomach. It was a mixture of rice, half putrid potatoes, bits of carrots, and fish. But the most peculiar thing was that among these pieces of carrot—which were very large—we found lumps of sugar, figs, and grapes. I do not know how this came about. I only know that it tasted very bad, that it was a horrible broth, not only by reason of the bad quality of the comestibles which went to make it, but also of the manner of preparing the soup. By what greasy fiends was it concocted?

I was never able to find out.

Those who had money ate in the canteen, where there were preserved foods. The Russians all lived on the unappetizing food I have described.

We were given bread and coffee in the morning, at noon a plate of the food I have tried to describe, and at night another glass of coffee, with honey in place of sugar.

The poor Russians were always hungry. Sometimes

when the serving of soup was less than usual, they were given a herring apiece. Almost all the Frenchmen threw away the heads of the fish, and I noted that the Russians used to pick them up, wash them, boil them, and eat them with great satisfaction.

Not a few of the Frenchmen who utilized the canteen used to claim their ration, and give it secretly to some Russian. This could not be done openly. A contractor had undertaken to provide our food at so much per head; and he endeavoured to save as many rations as possible.

As at Zossen, water was scarce. Cleanliness, therefore, was an idle word. Our hands and faces were always filthy and we were covered with lice. And I used to think of the good linen in my trunks, of the Sundays in Valenciennes, when, as soon as I had changed and shaved, I used gaily to set out on some excursion to this or that part of the frontier. So greatly did the contrast pain me, so greatly did it oppress my heart to recollect the good days gone by, that I decided, if only for my own sake, not to evoke the memory of my happy days as mechanician in the Cail factory. What was the use of causing myself pain if thereby I could not remedy my situation?

It was better and more practical to devote all my mental energies to seeking the means of returning to Spain. This, above all since the episode of the bayonet-thrust, appeared to me extremely difficult. But I did not lose hope. I told myself that since my life was spared and my health preserved—though here, of course, there was much to be desired, as I felt very weak and was fatigued by the slightest effort—I should be able to hold out till the end of the

war. And once peace came I would contrive that the Germans should admit their mistake and send me home to my own country.

The rate of mortality, and above all of sickness, was always very high in the Chemnitz camp. It is easy to understand that it would be. We used to sleep and lie, as I have told, sixteen men in the space intended for four horses. Water was scarce. There was no means of changing our underclothing. The straw which served us for bed was never renewed.

And in the month of February a terrible epidemic appeared. Within a short time 700 Russians and 300 Frenchmen died of it. (These figures are approximate.) And then there were harrowing sights in the stables.

The men died with astonishing rapidity. They first suffered from very severe chills; then a very high fever attacked them; the face became covered with dark spots, and they died, without its being possible for any one to help them.

Every morning dozens of dead bodies were removed from the straw.

When one of these unhappy men felt himself turning cold he called the friend in whom he had most confidence, and confided to him the execution of his last wishes. And as this friend often perished as well, some of the sick men took the precaution of begging several persons simultaneously to undertake the transmission of their last thoughts to their families. In this way there was some probability that their families would learn how they had died—of what, and in what part of Germany.

The Germans laid the blame for the plague on the Russians. They said that we were dying of typhus,

and that this typhus was due to the Russian prisoners. It is possible, but I believe that if our organisms did not resist the disease it was because they were weakened by hunger. The epidemic was caused by filth. The wasted condition of our bodies prevented our holding out against it.

It is true that I am an ignorant person, a simple working-man, without more education than the little which I was able, by stealing hours from my sleep, to obtain in France and Spain. But it seems to me that I am right and that the doctors cannot alter the fact.

The German doctors in charge of the medical service in our camp adopted an extraordinary system of diagnosis—if that is the word for it?—where the Russian prisoners were concerned.

Every morning a *feldtchei* hurried through the stables where the unfortunate Russians were, and told them that those who felt unwell were to go to a big common-room, with doors opening on to a huge courtyard.

Here, by six or eight o'clock, the sick Russian prisoners had to undress themselves: and once completely undressed, notwithstanding the cruellest cold—it was February, in Germany—they were forced to go out into the courtyard.

The *feldtchei*, without going very near them, made them form up in file. And there they waited twenty or thirty minutes.

After this enforced waiting a German military doctor entered the courtyard from the opposite end, sat down on a chair, and produced a pair of field-glasses.

And then, from a distance of fifty feet, by the aid

of the said field-glasses, he proceeded to examine the naked Russians.

He asked them no questions; however, they would not have understood him, or only very imperfectly.

After a brief examination he sent them to the infirmary. Naturally those who did not die of typhus died, as a result of this examination, of bronchitis or pneumonia.

With the French prisoners they did not proceed in this way, nor with those of other nationalities. When these were ill and told to assemble at the same place, they were sent to the infirmary without being forced to wait naked in a courtyard.

I suppose these details will be unfamiliar to our Ambassador in Berlin, Señor Polo de Bernabé, who represented the interests of Russia in Germany during the war.

In the Chemnitz camp there were only three or four Englishmen. They had money, but the Germans would not sell them anything in the canteen. The canteen-keeper and his assistants used to shower insults upon them, and no sooner caught sight of them than they repeated their eternal *Gott strafe England*, a phrase in fashion among the Germans since the close of the battle of Flanders.

The canteen-keeper concluded by placing *Gott strafe England* on the door of his establishment. The English took the matter calmly, and bought from the canteen through the French or Belgians.

I remember at the end of January, shortly before the epidemic set in, we were all searched in order to take from us what gold we had. We were made to undress one by one, but not a single piece of gold was discovered. There were some thousands of



francs in gold in the camp. But we had buried it two or three days before the search was to be made—some of the sentries were tremendous chatterers—and whoever had a few gold pieces hid them in time.

On the occasion of this search we were numbered, and about this time also the Germans placed on the doors of the stables a placard which stated that the word *adieu*, employed in Germany as a formula of farewell, had been expunged from the German dictionaries, on account of its French origin.

This annoyed us very much. What did it matter to us if the Germans, when taking leave of one another, did not say *adieu*, but employed a word of Teutonic origin? We were preoccupied by other matters, not by this.

At the beginning of May the doctors declared the epidemic to be over. They removed us from our quarters and imprisoned us in some great barracks. While they were disinfecting the stables they burned the straw and replaced it by very thin straw mattresses.

At the same time they took all our clothes from us, burned them, fumigated us, and gave us garments sent by the Swiss Red Cross.

The prisoners were forced to work in mines, in camps, in factories, and on buildings. In this connection there were terrible scenes, as they deliberately selected the weakest and most delicate for removal to the mines. They had drawn up a sort of roll-call. They asked each prisoner his trade or profession. Very well: when the *Kommandantur* received requests for miners, it selected the advocates, engineers, students, book-keepers, etc.



They resisted, cried aloud, hid themselves, and were hunted through the stables. Such persecutions, with the accompaniment of kicks, blows, and insults, made us profoundly angry. On several occasions these episodes gave rise to actual mutinies, which were cruelly stifled.

The unfortunate men who were sent to the mines were bound and sent down the shafts. When they refused to work they were left in some corner of the galleries, motionless, like bundles, for one, two, or three days, or as long as was necessary to subdue them. Almost all, overcome by hunger, thirst, and the horror of their position, ended by resigning themselves. They were appointed to a mess, and placed under the orders of brutal foremen, who treated them as the negroes were treated in America, according to history, in the days of slavery. The few who did not give in died, no doubt, still bound, of hunger and thirst, for they never returned to the camp.

Those who worked in the mines spent several successive weeks in them. Then they were brought back and replaced by others.

One day 200 prisoners were selected, and taken away to work as labourers on the construction of a barracks which was being built some seven or eight miles from our camp. They left in the morning, at daybreak, and returned late at night. They had, therefore, in going and returning, to walk some fifteen miles.

As they were given neither food nor water while at work on this barracks, the prisoners begged us to take them dinner at mid-day, so that they should not go through the whole day fasting. I went some-

times, when it was not raining too heavily, in order to breathe the fresh air. We were guarded by soldiers of the *landsturm*, who did not seem particularly pleased by the daily walk which we forced them to take.

From day to day, too, many hundreds of prisoners were taken to work in the fields. I ought to say that the Germans did not impose this penalty, or *corvée*, as a Frenchman called it, on the civilians, so that I always managed to escape this extra cause of suffering.

A considerable number of prisoners were sent to work in the factories. When these latter were near at hand they returned at nine or ten o'clock at night.

In May a list was drawn up of all the agricultural labourers. They were told that they would be sent into the occupied territories of France and Belgium, in order that they might work in the fields. A party was made up, which left one morning in a train composed of cattle-trucks. They were never heard of again.

Until May the feeding of the camp had been entrusted to a contractor. The military authorities replaced him, as they were assured that we were dying of starvation. This change coincided with the practical abolition of the canteen. The canteen-keeper thenceforth sold us only marmalade, paper, cigars, and mineral waters. It was said that the provisions left in Germany must not be consumed by prisoners, even if the latter paid for them.

All through May and a part of June the food was rather better, and, above all, more abundant. But after the second half of June we were forced to

regret the contractor. What bread! What coffee! What soup! What putrid herring! What stews, with a foundation of suet! And the worst of it was that as there was no food in the canteen—except marmalade—we had either to eat this loathsome stuff or die of starvation, even though money was not lacking.

The canteen-keeper, as he was selling hardly anything, raised the prices of the few articles he had in stock. A packet of Lille tobacco, worth forty centimes, was put up to one mark; and other things in proportion.

In May we were told that all—civilians and soldiers alike—might write to their homes through the Swiss Red Cross. I hastened to write various letters, but they were not accepted. I protested, asking the cause of this exception, which prejudiced me so greatly. They gave me the cunning answer that I, being a Portuguese, could not write to any Government but that of Lisbon. This was enough to make me despair, and I did very often feel hopeless and desperate.

During the spring we received permission to form musical clubs. We had an orchestra which consisted of instruments made of tins and perforated canes.

The 25th of May arrived, a day memorable in the Chemnitz camp. Some of our guardians, about mid-day, began to talk eagerly among themselves, as though discussing some important success. And this aroused our curiosity.

We had struck up an acquaintance with certain of them, despite their kicks and insults. We asked them what had happened, and they finally told us,

unwillingly, that Italy had taken the part of the Allies and was mobilizing against Austria.

How they abused the Italians as they gave us this news! They were repeating the insults of their newspapers, as we discovered later.

We were filled with delight and decided to celebrate the event by a march-past. We improvised a white banner with yellow letters—cut out of flannel—which read, in French—

“Symphony of the Chemnitz Camp—Prisoners of War—Liberty soon!”

We paraded this banner through all the stables, singing the *Marseillaise* and giving cheers for Italy. The orchestra played and we all shouted.

The sentinels became alarmed. A *feldwebel* who could not speak a word of French came into the stables. He was followed by more than 200 *land-sturm*, who levelled their rifles at us. The *feldwebel* announced himself by firing two revolver-shots which did no damage. The leaders responsible for the French and Russian companies were at once arrested. Meanwhile we hid the banner and the instruments.

At twelve o'clock at night the *feldwebel* again entered the stables. He was accompanied by one of the French prisoners, whom he forced to climb on to a plank set on an empty barrel, and to request us to surrender the banner.

We obeyed him. Shortly afterwards we were examined by means of two interpreters, one French and one Russian. But nothing could be discovered. No one had heard anything. No one had seen anything. There was not a single informer. The Germans finally wearied of it and left us in peace.

We slept badly. Hunger and the parasites kept

us awake. We used to sit upon our thin straw pallets and intone the *Marseillaise* under our voices. At other times we spoke of the war.

The war was our sole thought. We knew how it was going, because we had French, Swiss, and German newspapers, which the soldiers brought us in secret. These newspapers used to cost us ten to fifty marks a copy. We formed groups in order to buy them. They were read aloud. Hundreds of prisoners used to listen, breathless.

During the summer of 1915, as the Russians fell back, the depression was general. In September we brightened up a little when we heard of the Franco-British offensive in Artois and Champagne. The reports in *Le Matin*—which newspaper reached us pretty frequently—filled us with enthusiasm.

In this same September it was decided to record the personal description of each of the prisoners in the Chemnitz camp. (I do not know if the same thing was done in the other camps.) The alphabetical order was followed. The name, age, nationality, and personal peculiarities of each was recorded.

When they arrived at the letter T, seeing that they did not call me, I told them that they had forgotten me. They replied that I was the Portuguese Tonio Antuan. I retorted that I was called Valentin Torras. A sergeant produced the document which I had refused to sign. There the personal description of the Lusitanian in question was recorded. The sergeant read it out in German and then translated it into French.

“You can see very well it isn’t mine,” I asserted.

He gazed at me, comparing me with the description. Then he shrugged his shoulders and said—

"You are right. This description is not yours. But my superiors say it is, and I have to hold my tongue and obey. Therefore I am describing you as Tonio Antuan, a Portuguese subject, taken prisoner at Valenciennes."

"But this is an absurdity!" I cried, exasperated. This sergeant was a politic man.

"Utterly absurd," he conceded. "But I must not judge the conduct of those who are placed over me. If they assert that you are a Portuguese they must know what they are doing it for."

And he remained quite unperturbed.

During my long stay at Chemnitz only a Protestant pastor visited us. They told him at the *Kommandantur* that there was a Portuguese there who wanted to pass himself off as a Spaniard. When I approached him in order to tell him my story and ask him to intervene, I had scarcely uttered a few words when he stared at me in a distrustful manner and exclaimed—

"Ah! Yes! The Portuguese! Good! Good!"

And he turned away from me without consenting to hear me.

And when a French friend of mine told him that I was Spanish, he added, with a knowing expression—

"Yes! Yes! They told me the story at the *Kommandantur*. He is a Portuguese, and says he is a Spaniard. Very ingenious! Very ingenious!"

He took himself off, and I have not seen him since. Nor do I wish to do so.

I have said nothing about the way in which the Germans used to bury the dead. Above all, at the time of the epidemic, they removed them from the stables and the infirmary, two or three at a time, in the cart which was used to remove the sweepings,

without wrapping them in shrouds, much less placing them in coffins, as though they had been dogs.

They were taken to a plot of land near the cemetery of Chemnitz, and thrown into a deep pit like an ossuary.

A Frenchman had sculptured a simple and graceful funeral monument, on which was a flat stone with the following inscription—

“To our French and Russian fellow-prisoners.”

This monument, which stands in the prisoners' cemetery at Chemnitz, cost £100, which was obtained by subscription.

## CHAPTER IV

### GROSS-PORITSCH

A change of camp—On the Austrian frontier—The journey—Description of the camp—Diet—Potatoes—Punishments—Escape of Russians—The tragedy of the schoolmaster—At Zwickau—A letter—Fabricated news—The women of Lyons—The enviable pigsties—An attempted escape—The food parcels—By means of money—A question of shoes—A strange attempt.

ON the 15th of October 1000 civilians, myself among them, were chosen to be sent to Gross-Poritsch, on the Austrian frontier. I do not know why this was done. Some of those chosen asked the reason at the *Kommandantur*. They were told not to think about it but to obey.

I was not sorry to leave Chemnitz. So many disagreeable things had happened to me in this camp that I had no fear lest I should be more unhappy in any other part of Germany.

The journey—in a train made up of cattle-trucks, of course—lasted from five in the morning till six in the evening. As usual on such occasions, we were given no water all day. I was not surprised. My companions did not protest. To what end? It was useless.

Night was falling when we reached the new camp. It consisted of a number of streets of wooden barracks, in the midst of a dry plain, about a mile from the town which gave it its name. Tall wire fences surrounded



it. It was guarded by elderly soldiers, most of them grey-haired and slow in their movements. Not a few were rheumatic. If they had ever been at the front they could have done little damage to the enemy.

There were 3500 French and Belgian prisoners, many Russian officers and sergeants, some civilians from Russian Poland, and two English civilians, if I remember rightly.

Each barrack lodged 250 men; as the space was insufficient one could hardly breathe. We lived crowded together, in an indescribable state of confusion. The camp would have been comparatively healthy if there had been a larger number of barracks.

Our arrival confounded those prisoners who were already there. We had to find room for ourselves, where there had not been room for them. The thing seemed impossible, but the *Kommandantur* settled it thus: The order was issued that each barrack should receive a given number of the new arrivals. Both the previous occupants and those recently arrived ran a risk of asphyxiation. But this was not a matter of any importance.

The food was infernal. It consisted of potatoes boiled with salt, suet, and small pieces of K.K. bread. There was no recourse to the canteen. Only tobacco, paper, and lemonade was sold there.

We were told that the food had been steadily growing worse. We believed that there was already a monopoly in potatoes, suet, and K.K. bread, but it was not so. From the beginning of the new year they were not only extremely scanty, but utterly uneatable. I struggled with my hunger, which urged me to eat that watery dough, and with my palate, which refused it in disgust. Some days my hunger

conquered; on other days my palate. By good luck I made friends, after a time, with some Frenchmen who used to receive, from their homes, parcels of bread, jams, and chocolate, and who lived exclusively on these. And these charitable men helped me almost every day. To them I owe my life, for I assuredly could not have held out against the alimentary regimen of the camp.

The Russian officers and sergeants lived on the mess allowance and the leavings of the French.

It was at Gross-Poritsch that the steps relative to my liberation were taken. They were long, complicated and dramatic. They will be the subject of an entire chapter. In this I shall finally record my recollections of life as I lived it and saw it lived in Gross-Poritsch.

What has permanently engraven itself in my mind is everything relating to the punishments. Each camp, according to the temper and character of the commander, had its own peculiar punishments. I will describe those of Zossen, Chemnitz, and Gross-Poritsch.

Punishment of the knapsack : A knapsack was filled with sand or bricks and strapped on the back of the prisoner whom it was desired to punish.

He then had to throw himself on the ground, face downwards, and rise again with a bound. A non-commissioned officer, armed with a stick, struck him when the double movement was not made with sufficient rapidity.

In a few minutes the unlucky man was exhausted; sweating, panting for breath, and suffering agonies in his loins. If he slowed down the implacable stick fell upon him. And the torture continued until the

non-commissioned officer chose to bring it to an end.

As in Germany everything is done according to order, the non-commissioned officer was told, as a general thing—

“This man has earned a punishment. You will make him throw himself on the ground and get up again, with the knapsack, fifty times.”

And the non-commissioned officer carefully counted the movements and did not lose one. I must admit, on the other hand, that he did not increase them. He was a slave to his orders, and obeyed them like a machine.

One afternoon a French sergeant was punished with the torture of the knapsack. He was a man of a very strong and obstinate character, who always protested when he heard that any one was to be made the victim of an exceptional act of injustice. He spoke German, and in this language he used to argue with his warders. They bore him a particular grudge.

He was condemned to stretch himself out and rise to his feet, with the knapsack full of bricks on his back, 250 successive times.

The torture was inflicted in the presence of a large number of prisoners. I was among them. We murmured; we begged the Germans to have mercy on the unfortunate man; but he and his executioner were divided from us by a wall of soldiers armed with rifles.

The sergeant offered resistance. The blows rained upon him. A *feldwebel* grew exhausted and yielded his stick to another. The time went by. When the second *feldwebel* had forced the sergeant to fall and

rise 214 times he called a third officer, for he, too, was unable to strike any more blows. But this third officer was unable to proceed with his duty. The sergeant had burst a blood-vessel. The blood was pouring from his mouth. He lay on the ground, his arms like the arms of a cross, a lifeless mass. He was carried to the infirmary. Thence he went to the cemetery. He was a man of such health that he ought to have lived a century.

Another punishment consisted in tying the wrists of a prisoner and suspending him from an iron bar. First he was made to stand on two or three bricks. Once he was strung up these were removed. The unhappy man tried to support himself by standing on the tips of his toes. Thus he was left one, two, or three hours. When he was taken down he was half dead and his wrists were dripping blood.

The punishment of the cage, as its name indicates, consisted in enclosing a man within a circle formed of six posts united by barbed wire. This cage was placed in some corner of the camp, in the open air. A sentry watched the prisoner. He was left there three to six days, almost without power of movement, as the cage was very small and the barbs pointed inwards. There he had to eat, and so forth. The sun shone and the snow or rain fell upon him. He could not sleep, for if sleep overcame him and he fell to one side the spikes would enter his neck or shoulder.

The punishment of the post was the most frequent. An upright post was deeply planted in the ground, and the victim was bound to it by the throat, the breast, the belly and the legs, the cords being tightened until they cut into the flesh. The arms, too, were tied, but to the body. The victim remained

thus, immovable, from twelve to twenty-four hours on an average. The German soldiers who guarded us displayed all the greater indifference before these punishments, inasmuch as they, too, had frequently suffered them. Only the punishment of the knapsack had been invented especially for us. The others constituted the basis of the *feldwebel's* repertoire. I saw the punishments of the post and the cage on many and many an occasion inflicted upon the German soldiers who guarded us, for having in some way been negligent while on sentry-go. They did not go out of our sight when their own men were to be punished. The cage employed for us, the stake to which they bound us, were utilized by the non-commissioned officers for the punishments which they inflicted on their men. These suffered in silence. Their obedience is extraordinary. I remember that one man of forty-odd years, fat, ruddy, with a big nose and gold-rimmed spectacles, of whom the other Germans said that he was very wealthy, and a professional man, was placed in the cage for a day. I do not know why. He was there for six hours, with hanging head; he was taken out, and proceeded to eat his rations with the same appetite as usual. I watched him. I could not perceive in him the slightest sign of anger, nor did he even cast a rancorous glance at the *feldwebel* who had so humiliated him.

"These men are made of different paste," said a Belgian, commenting on this incident.

The civilians suffered the punishment of the post very frequently. The torture of the cage was rarely inflicted on them; that of the knapsack never.

It must not be supposed that the punishments inflicted on us, both soldiers and civilians, were the

result of serious offences. As a rule we were punished for raising our voices when an officer was near, for smoking in the barracks; for going too near the barbed-wire fences, for not saluting a *feldwebel* promptly enough, etc. It will be understood that we had no desire to aggravate our position by foolish behaviour, especially as the Germans are not the sort of people to tolerate infractions of their rules.

The Russian and English prisoners were the most unfortunate men in the camp. They received neither money nor parcels of food. They were the object of a positive hatred. The famous *Gott strafe England* reverberated through our barracks in a way which was disastrous for the subjects of King George. The German soldiers used to regard the French with a certain sympathy, the Belgians with indifference, the Russians with repugnance, and the British with abhorrence.

In Chemnitz they formed teams of twenty-five Russians, harnessed them with ropes, and forced them to plough the fields. On the French, British, and Belgians they did not impose this degrading labour. I believe they did not dare to force the English to draw the plough, for the latter used to say aloud that they would kill themselves first. But the poor Russians obeyed like lambs.

From Gross-Poritsch a truly marvellous escape was effected. A group of Russians excavated a tunnel some sixty yards in length, between their barrack and the nearest wire fence. They worked all night, in relays, for a month. Four Frenchmen joined them, two of them assisting. In all, these four Frenchmen and thirty-four Russians escaped. Some were caught, brought back to Gross-Poritsch, and punished in a

terrible manner. I do not know whether the others succeeded in getting out of Germany. They meant to go to Switzerland.

Some of the civilians who had been some time at Gross-Poritsch told stories to make one shudder, which filled me with horror and indignation.

I made friends with a Frenchman, an elderly man, over fifty years of age. He could hardly see. He all but groped his way when he moved. He wore smoked glasses. I asked him if he suffered from any weakness of the eyes, and he informed me—

“Before the war my sight was good. I am a school-master. I used to live with my unmarried daughter. The Germans came and outraged the unhappy girl before me. She shrieked in a heartrending manner. I struggled. They overpowered me and bound me. I had a cerebral attack, and through this I have almost lost my sight. And the most horrible thing is that my daughter is pregnant! Pregnant by a German! It is enough to drive one mad.”

This unhappy father is now in France. As he was over forty-five years of age he was exchanged for a German, also over age, who was a prisoner in France.

Another prisoner told me the following story—

To Zwickau (he pronounced it *Esvicau*, but I suppose he meant Zwickau) the Germans conveyed about a thousand civilians from two villages in eastern France—men, women, and children. Statistics were drawn up of the families. Then the Germans set the wives and children on one side, and imprisoned with them, not their husbands, fathers, and brothers, but men who were in no way related to them. Among these were seven priests. Some time after inflicting this mixed imprisonment the women, children, and



old men were repatriated. The men, from sixteen to forty-five, remained at Zwickau.

Of course, I am relating what I saw and what I was told. I will vouch for the veracity of my narrative in all that concerns the incidents witnessed by myself. As for the rest, I record them without comment. Nevertheless, I ought to say that the poor French schoolmaster whose tragedy I have narrated above was no impostor. It was easy to see that he was speaking the truth when he related his misfortunes.

At Gross-Poritsch a prisoner one day received a letter from his wife. This letter arrived by a special channel, of which I can say nothing, as I myself made use of it in order to ensure that people in Spain should know what was happening to a Catalan subject of Don Alfonso XIII. In the German prisoners' camps all sorts of efforts are made to communicate with the outside world. Ordinary letters are permitted, subject to certain restrictions. At the beginning of the war not even these used to reach their destination.

I was remarking that a French prisoner received a letter from his wife. He supposed it to come from Roubaix, where his home had been before the war. Imagine his surprise and his misery when he saw that it was dated from Cologne.

His wife informed him that the Germans had forcibly removed her from Roubaix—as was the case with many others—in order to make her work in Germany; that she had refused to work, and that they then imprisoned her in a civil prison, where she was subjected to a diet of herrings, water, and K.K. bread.

The poor Frenchman was in despair. He wanted



to crack his skull against a corner of the barracks. We found it very difficult to calm him.

In Gross-Poritsch there were almost daily exhibited, on a board or hoarding, telegrams which invariably contained accounts of great victories won at sea, on land, or in the air, by the German, Austrian, Turkish or Bulgarian troops.

One day the Germans exhibited a news-placard which nearly gave rise to scenes of bloodshed.

There were in the camp a great many soldiers from the Lyons district, and this was known at the *Kommandantur*. And one morning appeared on the afore-said notice-board a telegram which read more or less as follows—

“Berne.—They say in Lyons that the police have sent a number of French soldiers’ wives to prison, natives of Lyons and inhabiting the said city or the adjacent district immediately before the war. The reason is that all these women, notwithstanding the fact that they are married, and that their husbands are fighting against the invader, are causing a grave scandal with their lovers.

“These lovers are for the most part Senegalese, natives of Morocco, Algerians, Annamites, etc., men of the negro troops which have been brought to France.”

The reading of such a telegram, which was, of course, untrue, and was placed on the notice-board in order to irritate the prisoners from Lyons, caused an explosion of rage. The notice-board was broken to pieces. There were shouts, blasphemies, threats and curses. The guards had their work cut out to still the uproar.

One day the Germans told us that if we cared to

build pigsties and feed a few dozens of pigs on the scraps of our food, the pigs should be ours, and would serve, when once fattened, to ameliorate our rations. We replied that we would build the pigsties. Some of us were master carpenters. Under their orders some pigsties were built, much more comfortable than our barracks. The pigs arrived a little later. They fattened up beautifully. One day they were taken away from us, and of course we never saw so much as a trotter of theirs in our food. Afterwards we learned that they belonged to an individual who had paid so much to the *Kommandantur*.

Two French prisoners were transported, with their consent—they were civilians—to the French villages to-day in the hands of the Germans, of Joef and Home-court. They were put to agricultural labour. They escaped, and tried to take refuge in the French lines. They were caught and sent back to the camp.

They told us that they came across Russians, prisoners of war, working in the iron mines. These Russians are fed by the Spanish-American committee. Germany passes them off as civilians, and then employs them as miners, thereby saving the cost of their maintenance. I do not know if this is the truth, but this is what the two Frenchmen told us.

During my last days at Gross-Poritsch there was a reign of plenty; there was one day when 600 parcels of food arrived in camp.

We civilian prisoners used to go to the station with carts to fetch these parcels. We used to go through the town, and our presence caused a veritable daily tumult. Crowds of women and children used to follow us, crying—

“ Frenchmen ! Biscuits ! ”

They begged us for bread so insistently, and their need was so great, that we always used to provide ourselves, before going out, with loaves, cakes, and other eatables, and these we used to distribute. It was astonishing that we, prisoners, should thus have succoured the civil population of Gross-Poritsch.

In this connection touching scenes occurred. The mothers used to come up to us in the street, and tell us that their sons were starving, that we would surely keep something back for them, that they knew the French had good hearts. We would gladly have distributed more food among them, but we had to help the Russians, who received nothing, and who were actually dying of starvation.

Our soft white bread—as the reader may know, they were then making in France a special wheat bread which does not become stale for a number of days, and which is known as prisoners' bread—excited the appetite of the soldiers and non-commissioned officers who guarded us. And to obtain one of these loaves they allowed us all sorts of liberties. The regulations suffered, but neither they nor we regretted this.

It is indeed the truth that money works miracles. At Zossen men who possessed a few hundred marks were even able to arrange to receive feminine visitors. This is not what I have been told : I saw it with my own eyes. Of course these visits were nocturnal and not very frequent.

None the less, I will add that their rarity depended solely on the prisoners' lack of funds, and not on the difficulties encountered in receiving such visits.

Those who had to go to work outside the camp complained of the wooden shoes which had been given to all of us, and which weighed nearly seven pounds.

They could not walk in them. The French sergeants begged that they might be allowed to request their Government to send them lighter footgear. Permission was refused.

One day the *Kommandantur* requested the presence of a Frenchman who appeared to exert some influence over his companions of the same nationality. They told him that if he obtained 500 signatures to a message to Poincaré he would afterwards be set at liberty.

By this message the President of the French Republic was to be informed that it was his duty to sue to Germany for peace, as the German people was invincible, and that it was not right to prolong the captivity of so many thousands of his compatriots.

The Frenchman stated that he would never draft such a message, and that if it was drafted it would not be possible to find a man to sign it.

When he returned to the barracks he recounted their extraordinary proposal, which was the subject of much comment.

I have tried to group together in the present chapter all my memories of Gross-Poritsch which bear no relation to my endeavours to recover my liberty.

In the next chapter I shall tell how I managed to obtain my release.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY

First attempts—A letter to Paris—Another letter to Paris—A letter to the Red Cross—Correspondence—Señor Polo de Bernabé sends me ten marks and asks me for two receipts—A letter to Sor St. Bernard—My certificate of baptism—The commandant loses his temper—From Algeria—Good bread from Mlle. Cœurdacier—*Les Annales*—In prison because I do not ask to leave it—Señor Ferraches arrives—A day of emotions—More misunderstandings—A conversation in Catalan—I am threatened with trial by court-martial—Imprisoned again—A strange document—I refuse to sign it—I am again imprisoned—At last!

IN this chapter I am going briefly to tell of all the attempts I made to regain my freedom. I believe this portion of my Calvary is highly instructive, for it throws abundant light on various aspects of the actual condition of the prisoners of war in the German camps.

On the 22nd of December, 1915, I wrote to Paris, to the Marquis de Villa-Urrutia, whom I believed to be still the Ambassador of Spain to the French Republic.

These letters and others were sent by a channel which I cannot reveal for several reasons, the first being that it is frequently employed by the prisoners at Gross-Poritsch when they do not wish their letters to be read by the German censorship. Moreover, if I were to tell what I know in this connection it is probable that several persons would be punished.

The letter was received by the new Ambassador, the Marquis de Valtierra, who hastened to send it to the Spanish Government. I suppose the latter made a complaint to Berlin, and I suppose, too, that the Germans replied that I was a Portuguese, and that I was lying when I sought to pass for a native of Spain.

One day, reading a copy of *Le Matin*—I have already stated that, by paying very dear for them, we used to obtain copies of French newspapers at the camp—I discovered that Señor León y Castillo had been appointed Spanish Ambassador to the French Republic. I wrote to him, then, telling him what had happened to me, and begging him to interest himself on my behalf. I also sent another letter to the Franco-Belgian Red Cross in Geneva. The latter replied to me, advising me to apply personally to Señor Polo de Bernabé, the Spanish representative at the Court of Berlin. I replied, stating that I was not permitted to communicate with my Ambassador, and begging them to report my misadventure to the Spanish Minister at Berne. The Red Cross did so, and the Spanish Minister at Berne wrote to Señor Polo.

All these steps occupied more than three months. Finally on the 25th of March I received a letter from Señor Polo de Bernabé, which will be shown with others at the end of this narrative. In it the Ambassador told me that he was occupying himself with my affairs, and he sent me a remittance of twelve marks. He asked me to send him two receipts for this sum, as a proof of its dispatch and delivery. I hastened to send them by the normal channel.

I wrote also—since I naturally wished to try every means of liberation—to Sor Bernard, of the Catholic Committee of War Prisoners in Geneva. He replied that he had instructed the Superior of the Sisters of Charity in Barcelona (I had told him in my letter that my father was employed in the city gaol), so that they would inform the poor old man that I was alive. My father obtained my certificate of baptism on the 4th of February, at Manresa. This document was legalized and countersigned on the 28th of the same month by the German Consul at Barcelona. I received it in April. I then decided to make a supreme effort.

Provided with the official letter received from Señor Navarro, Señor Polo's deputy, and with the certificate of baptism, I presented myself at the *Kommandantur* and solicited an interview with the commandant of the camp.

He received me with a very ill will. I informed him that the letter of the Ambassador and the certificate of baptism proved that I was a Spaniard, and I begged him to set me at liberty as early as possible.

He examined the certificate of baptism; he then said, contemptuously—

“It is false.”

“If it is false,” I objected, “how is it that the German Consul at Barcelona countersigned it?”

He remained silent, since my argument was truly a powerful one. And not knowing what to reply, he decided to hustle me and throw me rudely out of his office.

I determined, in view of this, to set my hopes on the result of Señor Polo's activities.



To my great surprise, I one day received a letter from Algeria. A Mlle. Lopes wrote to me from Philippeville, in French, asking me who I was, as she had read my name and appeal in one of the bulletins of the Red Cross. I answered her by the normal channel, and she sent me, shortly afterwards, two parcels of provisions, each weighing eleven pounds.

I was also assisted by Mlle. Cœurdacier, of Billancourt, in France, who had for some time been sending me parcels of bread. I received from her some twenty parcels. From these pages I send these two charitable ladies the assurance of my profound gratitude.

I got into communication, by the secret channel, with *Les Annales*, the Parisian journal. They replied to me that they had written to my father and that they had sent me some provisions. And they did indeed send me various parcels.

These parcels contained soft white bread, chocolate, tinned meats, sugar, sweetmeats, etc.

In April—I do not precisely remember the date—the commander of the camp summoned me to the *Kommandantur*.

He showed me the document relating to the Portuguese Tonio Antuan. He translated it to me in a pompous manner, and told me that I was to sign it.

I asked to be allowed to examine it. Inside it was an envelope containing documents issued by the Spanish Ministry of State, in which my liberty and an indemnity were demanded.

I showed him the envelope; I was filled with delight.



“With this,” I said, “there is more than enough to make them set me at liberty!”

The commandant grew angry.

“You are a Portuguese!” he said, in a choleric voice, “and you have persisted in saying the contrary! Will you sign?”

“No!”

He rose, took a few paces through the room, and then, calling to a soldier, gave the order that I should be placed in the cells.

They kept me there two days, on bread and water—and what bread! Three hundred grammes of K.K. bread for each twenty-four hours—and at the end of the two days they brought me out. I then wrote to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin by the normal channel, relating my adventures. They accepted my letter at the *Kommandantur*, but I believe they stopped short at that.

The commandant, more and more annoyed with me because I would not admit that I was a Portuguese, wanted to send me to work in the mines. I refused, saying that they should never take me there alive. And I wrote again to the Ambassador, once more by the normal channel, giving him an account of the new dispute in which I was involved.

But this time they returned my letter, informing me that a Portuguese could not write to a Spanish Ambassador.

I did not go to the mines. Doubtless the commandant did not dare to commit that outrage. Probably, as he knew that there were those in Spain who knew of my case, he was afraid of compromising himself by such an improper action.

On the 16th of June, making use of the secret

channel—which was available only from time to time—I wrote once more to Señor Polo. The letter arrived, and Señor Polo resolved to send the physician of the Embassy, Señor Ferraches, to Gross-Poritsch. This was my salvation.

On the 20th Señor Ferraches arrived in the camp. I knew this, and I decided to profit by the occasion if it cost me my life.

Directly I saw the doctor I emerged from among a knot of prisoners and approached him swiftly.

“Excuse me, sir,” I began, “but I am——”

I could not continue. The German commandant, who was accompanying Señor Ferraches, violently tugged at his arm. Then he rushed at me, and with a brutal push he made me fall into the far from affectionate arms of a captain who was approaching me, having witnessed my audacity.

This captain seized me roughly, stared in my eyes in a threatening manner, and said—

“You come with me.”

“I will not!” I shouted. “I am a Spaniard! They must set me at liberty!”

The captain called two soldiers, who seized my arms and overpowered me.

I, in desperation, turned my face toward Señor Ferraches, who, at a few paces’ distance, was gazing at us in surprise, and shouted in Spanish, as loud as I could—

“See, señor, what the Germans of the Gross-Poritsch camp are doing to a Spaniard from Catalonia!”

The doctor made me a sign of comprehension, and answered, in an ordinary tone—

“Go with them.”

I obeyed, and they took me to the *Kommandantur*. I had a violent altercation, in French, with the captain. I asked him to let me speak to the Spanish delegate, and he refused, repeating the eternal refrain—

“You are a Portuguese. You are a Portuguese.”

When we were disputing most violently a *feldwebel* arrived, who said that the Spanish delegate wanted to speak with me. I did not understand him, but the captain repeated the remark to me in French, in these or similar terms—

“You have got what you want. The Spanish delegate wants to speak to you. But you are a Portuguese. He will convince himself of that. . . .”

He made me stand in a corner of the room between the two soldiers, and there I was from ten in the morning to one in the afternoon. All this time he was there signing papers.

At one o'clock he went out for a moment. He returned almost immediately, and smiling, with a smile which I recognized at a distance as being false, he said—

“The Spanish delegate has left the camp. He told me that he did not wish to speak to you, as he has convinced himself that you are a Portuguese. You can go back to your barrack.”

And I did go back to my barrack. Was it the truth the captain had told me? Had the Spanish delegate gone? My anxiety and misery were indescribable.

But in the barrack some of my French friends reassured me.

They had seen the Spanish commissioner going by, and had informed him that there was a country-

man of his in the camp. And the commissioner had replied—

“ I know, gentlemen. I shall see him.”

So the commissioner had not gone away ! So he did not tell the captain that he was convinced that I was a Portuguese ! What a weight was lifted from me ! And what contempt I felt for the captain who had lied so impudently !

To be sure, these French friends of mine who spoke to the commissioner were punished with several days' imprisonment. This redoubles the gratitude which I owe them for their behaviour.

I called to a Frenchman who spoke German and begged that he would follow the commissioner through the camp at some little distance, and that from time to time he would send me word of the place where he might be found.

I adopted this precaution because I was afraid the commissioner might go away before I could manage to see him again.

At five o'clock in the afternoon the *feldwebel* of the morning sent for me and informed me that in a few moments' time the Spanish commissioner would speak to me.

I, still distrustful, left the barrack, and perceived the delegate, who was talking to another German captain.

I noted that he presently began to move off towards the closets. I put myself in his way, and spoke to him—

“ Here I am.”

“ Hullo ! ” he exclaimed, upon seeing me.

Shortly afterwards an interpreter sought me out and took me to the commandant's office. When we

went in the captain who had tried to deceive me appeared. I looked him in the face, and with great indignation I exclaimed, in French—

“So the commissioner went away? So he was convinced that I am a Portuguese? If all Germans are like you, this is a queer sort of country!”

He hung his head and went away without a word. He looked vexed and ashamed.

Señor Ferraches, noting that I entered the room with an interpreter, asked the Germans to allow him to speak to me alone. They obeyed him, although unwillingly.

He then put me through a regular cross-examination.

Then he subjected me to a regular examination in Castilian.

I distrusted him. This gentleman seemed to be Spanish. But if he was not? He noticed my dubiety, and said—

“Explain yourself clearly. What do you fear from me?”

I, with Catalan frankness, replied resolutely—

“I am afraid you may be a German who speaks Spanish. I cannot trust these people.”

Without resenting my brusque reply, he responded, with a friendly expression—

“You are a Catalan. I am a Valencian, and I know your language. Let us talk in Catalan.”

Hearing him express himself correctly in Catalan, my doubts evaporated, and I told him in detail of my long sufferings.

It came out by chance that Señor Ferraches knew the village of Jubia very well indeed; a village about two miles from El Ferrol, where I had lived for seven

years, having been employed with my father by the firm of Barcon & Company.

I gave him details as to this village and its leading inhabitants, and this confirmed him in his opinion that I had been the victim of an unspeakable outrage.

“I am completely convinced,” he said, “that you are Valentin Torras, native of Manresa, not Tonio Antuan, the Portuguese subject. I had orders to insist on speaking to you. I should have asked to do so this morning, but seeing what an irritable person the commandant of the camp was, and being no lover of violence, I decided to wait until he became more moderate. For this reason I waited seven hours. Calm yourself; you will soon recover your liberty.”

I had two authorized receipts from the camp authorities, one for the note-book in which I had copied the letters which I had written during my captivity, and the other for the certificate of baptism which my father had sent me. They had asked me for both these things, and I would not give them up until they gave me receipts for them.

Well, I gave him both receipts, begging him to give them in at the Embassy, since I was afraid the Germans would take them from me on restoring me to liberty.

He took charge of the receipts, gave me a note for twenty marks, took leave of me very kindly, and went. I am extremely grateful to him for his kindness. He displayed energy and diplomacy. He did not allow himself to be tricked or intimidated.

On the 22nd of June—that is, a couple of days later—the captain (it was my old friend) sent for me and informed me that the commandant had not

forced me to appear before a court-martial, which would have sentenced me to a terrible punishment, as my ignorance—I think he employed that word—caused him to have compassion on me.

“Don’t let that deter him,” I replied. “Perhaps the gentlemen of the court-martial are more just than he.”

However, he had not sent for me merely to talk about the compassion which the commandant felt for me, but in order to inform me once again that I was Tonio Antuan.

“You are the Portuguese, Tonio Antuan,” he said. “You are not Valentin Torras.”

“Again!” I replied. “And you called me up for this!”

“I sent for you in order to tell you that you are going to the cells.”

He acted accordingly. I was put in prison, and remained there for six days on bread and water.

When they thought my will had been subdued—they did not know that I have been obstinate from childhood—they took me out of my cell.

The same captain, for my sins—how antipathetic he was to me!—asked me if I would sign a document written in German.

“What does it say?” I asked, with natural suspicion.

He translated it into French for me. In it I was made to declare—

1. That the Germans had detained me at Valenciennes in order to keep me out of the way of the bullets and so save my life. (There had been no fighting in Valenciennes.)

2. That if I had been a prisoner for more than

twenty-one months it was because I had wished to pass myself off as the Portuguese Tonio Antuan, and had never revealed my Spanish nationality.

3. That I renounced all claim to indemnification.

I was furious. "I sign this fabric of lies! Admit that I alone am to blame for my captivity! Renounce the indemnification which is justly mine!"

He threatened to lock me up again, and for several weeks. The prospect was not very favourable. Three hundred grammes of K.K. bread for all nourishment! Water at discretion! Absolute darkness, since the cell had no opening but the door!

None the less, I did not hesitate.

"You can lock me up again, you can kill me by starvation, you can shoot me if you like! I will not sign that!" I shouted, in desperation.

"Then back you go to the cells."

"Let me go, then. But I shall come out again some day, and my Ambassador will know of it."

"Your Ambassador is a good fellow. He will do, as always, what the German Government asks him to do."

"He will do his duty and demand my liberation."

He laughed, and ordered that I should be returned to my cell.

But my deliverance was approaching. Two days later—on the 30th of June, at four o'clock in the afternoon—I was taken out and led to the *Kommandantur*, and informed that I was to get ready to leave the camp on the following day, the 1st of July, at half-past five in the morning, my destination, since the order had come that I was to be set at liberty, being the Swiss frontier. They gave me my papers.



Imagine my feelings. I was going to leave the camp. I was going to leave Germany. Soon I should be in Switzerland. Soon after that I should be in Spain. I began to run like a madman. Shouting and gesticulating, I entered my barrack. My companions gathered about me in alarm. They thought I had become demented. . . .

## CHAPTER VI

### FROM GROSS-PORITSCH TO SWITZERLAND

Imprudence—I refuse my hand—Menard—The sensation caused in the train by white bread—Menard explains matters to my fellow-passengers—I make a distribution—We arrive in Dresden—The Hamburg-America Line—Such is war!—Menard's mother-in-law—Her troubles—A prisoner once more!—Saturday to Monday—Observations—In the Spanish Consulate—There are no orders!—To prison again!—And how hungry I am!—Dresden to Lindau—A change of warder—Munich—My possessions are taken from me—A sudden alarm—Incredible prices—Bavaria; Saxony—Trains of soldiers and wounded men—My felicity, as seen by them—They are astonished—On the Lake of Constance—On Swiss soil!

At half-past six I went in search of one of the barbers of the camp.

I was sitting on a stool, enduring the indispensable torture to which he subjected me, when the captain came up to me, my enemy of old: the captain of my company, whom I had to thank for how many supplementary torments—and how severe!

“You leave to-morrow?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied, surprised that he did not address me in his usual familiar manner.<sup>1</sup>

He smiled, and assumed an expression of innocent cordiality which left me stupefied.

“Good-bye, Torras,” he said. “I hope you may

<sup>1</sup> This captain usually addressed Torras as “thee” and “thou,” which does not seem to have been customary, even from a German officer to his prisoner.—TR.

have a pleasant journey. I hope you will not carry away with you an unpleasant recollection of us, and that when in Spain you will not speak ill of the Germans, or the treatment they gave you in the Gross-Poritsch camp."

I did not reply. Such a depth of cynicism left me flabbergasted.

And my perplexity increased when I saw that the captain was holding out his hand.

I hastily concealed mine behind my back, and replied—

"Excuse me if I do not give you my hand. I have my hands covered with soap, and I might soil yours."

He remained with his hand extended. He looked at me fixedly, murmured a few words in German, and slowly moved away.

I have not the least desire in the world ever to see him again.

The last night I passed in Gross-Poritsch I could not close my eyes. I turned over and over on the straw of my bed. I was conscious of a great oppression. I was equally ready to believe myself within a step or two of freedom, or about to enter upon a new stage of captivity. Would they really take me to the Swiss frontier? Would it not prove to be yet another trick, another disappointment, like so many more?

I took leave of my friends. Some of them gave me commissions for their families, which I promised faithfully to fulfil. They gazed at me with envy. I was going, and they were remaining, subjected to an iron discipline, with the disheartening prospect of blows with the clubbed rifle or stick or fist, kicks,

curses, the torture of the post, the torture of the cage, the torture of the knapsack. . . .

More than one wept and held out his hand in silence.

At five o'clock on the morning of the 1st of July the interpreter who was to accompany me as far as Dresden came to the door of my barrack. His name was Menard. He was a German of French descent, like D'Avignon.

"Have you anything prohibited?" he asked me brusquely.

"No. You can search me."

I had on me my note-book, which I had always kept hidden, and a few other things.

"What am I going to search you for? I don't think you'll take much of the dust of the camp with you!" And he laughed, with widely opened mouth, as though delighted by his wit. I joined in his hilarity.

We went to the railway-station. When I found myself outside the wire fences I turned round and contemplated the camp, which was beginning to wake up. What suffering existed there—what desperation, what rage!

We reached the station. We got into a train which was making ready to start. And at six o'clock we set out for Dresden, the capital of Saxony.

"Good-bye, Gross-Poritsch! Abode of malediction, more terrible even than Chemnitz and Zossen! Good-bye for ever! Would that the thousands of unfortunate soldiers who are suffering within your merciless palisades might say the same!"

The compartment which Menard and I entered was

full of German civilians, who were talking loudly and crowding to the windows to watch the landscape. I could not understand them. I understood only a few words here and there. I observed that after a short time I was already the subject of their conversation. I was wearing the uniform of the prisoners of war, with its distinctive mark.

Joy and the morning air had whetted my appetite. I was carrying, wrapped in paper, the last of the white bread and tinned meat which I had in my possession, and which came from the parcels of food I had been receiving.

I undid my bundle, cut some bread and meat, and began to eat. But the sight of my provisions, and above all of the white bread, had caused a perfect commotion in the compartment. There was almost an attempted mutiny. These respectable Germans were scandalized to see a prisoner of war eating such good things, while they had to confine themselves, for the most part, to potatoes cooked without fat and K.K. bread.

They addressed themselves to Menard. They were asking him—as he told me later—why such a scandal was allowed.

Menard, fearing lest I might be the victim of some outrage, since they were gazing at me in a terrifying manner, calmed them by telling them that my bread and meat came from parcels sent by charitable persons from France and Algeria. He added that the French Government was feeding those prisoners who were natives of France, sending them provisions by way of the Swiss Red Cross. But this explanation, far from calming them, brought their exasperation to a head. They all shouted, waved their hands, and made

extraordinary gestures. In my corner I, somewhat alarmed, was eating precipitately.

The information which Menard had given to these Germans, all, to judge by their appearance, of the middle class, was very far from pleasing them. One of them—so Menard told me—took the part of spokesman, and “went for” the Berlin Government like a regular ragamuffin.

He complained that they were being deceived. They had been led to believe that France and England, owing to the prolongation of the war, the lack of workers, and the submarines, were suffering from the most terrible dearth. And here they could allow themselves the luxury of keeping their prisoners like princes! Soft white bread, tinned meats, ham, game, chocolate, sugar, sweetmeats, cheese! All these were punctually forwarded to each French and English prisoner! And in the meantime the German people was fainting with hunger!

Menard, who was greatly perturbed, gave me an eloquent look. I understood what he wanted to convey to me, and I distributed some pieces of bread and chocolate among four of my travelling-companions. Then, giving up all idea of quietly finishing my refreshments, I did up my bundle and looked out of the window.

Not one of the Germans refused to accept my bread. Some devoured it there and then. Others gazed at it for a long time, as though at an extraordinary object, seldom to be seen, and put it away with a thousand precautions. I think they intended it for their families.

At half-past eleven in the morning we arrived in Dresden. Menard took me directly from the station

to the Saxon offices of the Hamburg-America steamship line.

Menard, in peace-time, was a Dresden employee of this company. When he was mobilized he received a promise that they would keep his place open for him. When peace arrived they would give him part of his pay.

He introduced me to the manager of the office, a very amiable gentleman, who subjected me to a regular examination. He asked me a number of questions in French, and presented me with a cigar. I told him all my sufferings. At the beginning of my narrative he seemed sceptical. But when Menard told him that what I said was the exact truth, he shrugged his shoulders, looked at me with a sort of half-scornful compassion, and observed—

“You have been the victim of an error, but you must resign yourself, for that’s what war is like.”

I did not want to begin a discussion with this gentleman, so I took leave of him politely.

From this office we went to the home of Menard’s wife; she was living with her mother.

This lady was the mistress of a house rather bigger than a boarding-house and very modest for a hotel. We spent a good time there, resting. Menard heard a long series of lamentations from the lips of his mother-in-law. There was a dearth of bread, butter, milk, meat, eggs, and fat; they had to put up with a diet consisting of fish and potatoes. And as there was nothing with which to flavour these scanty rations, the dishes were insipid and rather unsubstantial, and their appearance at table resulted in a regular thunderstorm, both morning and night.

“We are going through hard times,” sighed

Menard, when, as we were making our way to the Civil Government offices, he informed me of his mother-in-law's misfortunes. "And the worst of it is that this accursed war is never going to finish. . . ."

We entered the premises of the Civil Government, which formed part of the building which served as the public gaol. Menard spoke to an official, telling him that I was a Spaniard who had for a number of months been detained through a misunderstanding, and that I was returning to my country.

"A Spaniard?" replied the official, gazing at me with curiosity. "Very well, let them put him in a cell."

My heart sank into my boots when Menard translated this order to me. I protested. I told them they must allow me to leave Dresden and proceed to Switzerland; I asked where the Spanish Consulate was. All was useless, and I had to resign myself and allow myself to be locked into a cell.

Fortunately they did not take my papers or my provisions from me. Menard stated that I had nothing special on me, and they took his word for it.

At five o'clock in the afternoon they let me out of the cell, and took me to a sort of office, where an official who spoke French asked me a number of questions.

I told him I wanted to see Menard. He replied that Menard had left for Gross-Poritsch.

"Without saying good-bye to me?" I asked, ingenuously.

My surprise annoyed him strangely.

"Compliments are not usual between prisoners and their guards," he said.

Yes! Only too well did I know that!



After some reflection this Government official solved the problem of my situation for the time being.

"To-day is Saturday," he said. "To-morrow is Sunday, and nothing can be done. On Monday I will ask for orders. Meanwhile you will stay in the gaol."

And into prison they clapped me once again. I was most indignant. I had believed that I should already be out of Germany by Sunday. And after all, they were going to imprison me again. For how much longer?

Seeing that they were giving me nothing to eat, I attacked my bread and tinned meat. I called to the gaoler and informed him that I was not a prisoner, but a foreign subject who was returning to his own country. I suppose he did not understand me, since he listened to me with his mouth wide open. He went away, and a little while later indicated by signs that I might walk about a long narrow passage which was flanked by the doors of cells.

I observed that this prison was mixed, that is to say, for both sexes.

On Sunday, in the morning, the gaoler brought me a porringer full of prison rations. This food was much worse than that of Gross-Poritsch. It consisted of a viscous broth in which floated some scraps of potatoes with the peel on and a few grains of rice. Naturally I did not care to try the dish, and took refuge in my tinned meat.

On Monday morning (July 8) I was sent to the Consulate with a plain-clothes policeman, who was carrying a big cudgel. I believe he was also carrying a revolver. He gazed at me with distrust. I, as

I was not meditating escape, observed the expression of this human mastiff with a tranquil mind.

At the Spanish Consulate I was received by the Consul's secretary, who informed me that they were waiting for an order concerning me.

I complained of the fact that I was being kept in gaol. The secretary told me that I was quite right—they would send me to a hotel, and the Consulate would pay the cost. But the policeman objected. He had to go back to the prison with me.

The only concession the secretary and I could obtain from him was that he promised to tell his superiors that if they set me at liberty the Consulate would take charge of me absolutely.

But the gentlemen of the Civil Government were not anxious to please us. They stated that I should be safer in the prison. And in the prison I remained until eleven o'clock on the morning of the 7th, when they brought me out once again to take me to the Consulate.

I was received by the same secretary, who gave me ninety marks and a passport, and announced that there were still fresh annoyances in store for me.

"Why?" I asked. "What is wanting now?"

"An order—it hasn't yet come."

"And I have to go back to the cells?"

"There's nothing else for it."

"The trouble is my provisions have come to an end, and I'm hungry."

"You're hungry!" he said, with melancholy. "I, too, am hungry, and I am the secretary of the Spanish Consulate in Dresden. Who is there to-day in Germany who is not hungry?"

He telephoned to the Civil Government asking per-

mission to send me to a hotel. It was not accorded, and the policeman took charge of me and removed me to my cell.

But after a while they had me out and took various photographs of me. I thought it best to arm myself with philosophy. But as my bread and meat had come to an end, I had to make up my mind to eat K.K. bread and the prison rations.

How each mouthful stuck in my throat! How ill my stomach welcomed that alimentary problem! I ate very little, drinking a great deal of water, and presently I stretched myself out on my wretched bed and gave myself up to reflection.

The aspect of the streets of Dresden, during the days which I passed in that great city, from what I was able to see on my outings, was far from lively. Many of the shops were closed. Many lame or convalescent soldiers were strolling about. In some places I saw groups of women waiting for the food-shops to open, and policemen keeping order.

On the 9th of July, at nine o'clock at night, when I was getting ready to sleep, after having absorbed a repulsive sort of porridge, I was fetched out of my cell and informed that I might continue my journey.

Another policeman took charge of me, grasping me by the arm, and conducted me to the station. I bought a ticket for Lindau, which cost twenty-four marks ten pfennigs, got into a train, still with my escort, settled myself in a corner, and fell asleep.

I awaked at dawn. The train was still moving. At my side was an unknown man, who spoke a few words to me in German. He was dressed as a policeman. During my sleep there had been a change of guardians.

We arrived in Munich, the capital of Bavaria, at ten in the morning, after long stops in many stations.

I was taken to the Civil Government, which here, as in Dresden, abutted on the prison and was in communication with it.

As a first thought, they searched me and took my papers and my money from me. Then they informed me, in French, that they were going to imprison me as a suspected person. And they put me in a cell, letting me out again at half-past one.

I shouted, protested, threatened them with the intervention of my Ambassador, described my Calvary. . . . I talked so much and so loud that I was left almost hoarse. My blood was boiling, and there was a frightful hammering in my temples. I am sure that if this scene had been prolonged I should have been attacked by cerebral congestion.

Officials of various categories had surrounded us, debating as to what they should do with me.

Then one of them who appeared to possess the greatest authority was of opinion that they ought to lock me up again, but my lucky star so contrived that another official of higher rank arrived. They informed him as to my case. He looked at my passport, reflected for a few moments, and finally, with great pomposity, granted me permission to proceed to Switzerland.

My effects were returned to me. The policeman signed to me to follow him. When we were in the street—all this having taken about three hours—I indicated, by means of signs, that I was dying of starvation.

He took me to two shops. In the first, a baker's, I bought five small rolls of K.K. bread, greatly

resembling, in shape and size, those artichoke-like loaves of bread which they sell to the hotels in Madrid. In shape and size—yes, but in nothing else !

In the second shop I bought a pound of chocolate. For these two purchases I paid nine marks, and they would have cost me more but for the intervention of the policeman, who obtained a discount for me in both cases. In the baker's shop they were going to "do" me nicely, but the policeman persuaded them to desist.

The current price of the artichoke-shaped loaves of K.K. bread and of the packet of chocolate was eleven marks. I imagine this detail will give some idea of the price of provisions in Germany during the first half of last June.

The policeman delivered me to another in the station. This latter was to accompany me to the end of my journey.

I noticed, when watching the landscape from the windows, that the crops in Bavaria made a better appearance than in Saxony. I judge that in the latter kingdom they must have obtained a very poor harvest.

Every minute our train passed very long convoys of wounded soldiers. I believe almost all came from the Western front. What I know to-day of the events which occurred on the Somme, during the last part of my forced detention in Germany, confirms me in the opinion that these thousands of unfortunate men who were crossing Bavaria in the first half of July had received their wounds in Picardy.

In the stations there were numbers of women who went to the doors of the trains of wounded with cans of beer. Their appearance was dejected. Nowhere

did the enthusiasm of the first summer of the war appear. There were no patriotic songs, no applause, no cheers, no flowers. I am an ignorant person, but misfortune has made me reflect and observe. In those last hours of my journey to Switzerland I did not wish to lose one detail of what I saw. I wanted to take with me from Germany a reliable and very exact impression.

In the fields there were no men to be seen—not even old men. Women and children were doing the agricultural work. When they saw our train they stood up and stared at it for a long time in silence.

In one of the stations we passed through after Munich—I do not remember its name—several soldiers entered our compartment; men of comparatively ripe years, who were returning to the Western front, after having spent a few days' leave in their homes.

As I was wearing the prisoners' uniform, with its distinguishing marks, they took me for a Frenchman, who in consequence of some exchange was being sent back to his country.

They showed no ill-feeling against me. On the contrary, they showed themselves envious of my lot.

Among them were two or three who spoke French with moderate correctness. One, from what he told me, had been in the habit of visiting Paris at frequent intervals. He was a financier. Another declared himself as a drysalter. A third was an advocate and owner of house-property.

My policeman did not understand French, so that they and I had a long talk in that language.

I shall try to reproduce this conversation, as I consider it of great interest, and significant of the state of mind prevalent in Germany after two years

of war. When they left the train, while the policeman watched the fields and villages go by through the window, without troubling himself about me, I made some notes in my note-book. With these notes and my recollections—and I may without immodesty claim to have a good memory—I will try to record my conversation with these citizen soldiers. The drysalter was the first to turn to me.

“It looks as if you,” he said, in French, “have probably finished with the war. You have paid your contribution and have saved your life.”

“I do not understand,” I replied.

“I mean that you are returning to your own country and that there, in order to indemnify you for your sufferings, they will give you a year’s leave at least. And in a year . . .”

“My country is not fighting against Germany.”

“What?” queried the advocate. “But are you not French? And these clothes?”

“I am a Spaniard.”

“A Spaniard? And why are you wearing those clothes?”

“Because I have been the victim of an outrage. They took me prisoner at Valenciennes more than a year and eight months ago. And they kept me prisoner in three camps, in spite of all my protests. Now I am returning to Spain.”

They looked at me in surprise.

“I am going to the Swiss frontier. See my passport!”

They passed it from hand to hand. Finally convinced, they displayed much less reserve than they doubtless would have done had they continued to think me a Frenchman.



The advocate renewed the conversation, after bestowing an apprehensive glance upon the policeman, who had turned his back to us, as he had given himself up to the contemplation of the landscape.

"I have heard that Spain is the most Germanophile country among all the neutrals."

"I know nothing about that," I replied, in a distant manner.

"Yes. Our newspapers tell us that the Spanish, excepting an insignificant minority, are disposed to help us, and are giving evidence of the sympathy which they feel for us by all the means at their disposal."

"What you tell me surprises me greatly."

"Well, it is the truth. These are the surprises that events have in store for us. We hoped a great deal from Belgium, and Belgium was not willing to give us free passage. Again, we hoped to receive assistance, at least of a moral nature, from the Dutch, the Swedes, and the Yankees. And they are all going about their own business, and the Yankees have ranged themselves impudently on the side of our enemies. Spain, on the other hand, whom we hardly knew, is overwhelming us with her demonstrations of friendship. Oh, we are very grateful to her!"

The drysalter appeared to be possessed by a fixed idea.

"Always victories! Always victories!" he exclaimed. "The neutrals admire us for our victories. But that does not alter the fact that we failed to win the most necessary victory of all. And the fault is England's!"

Furiously, with his teeth clenched, he muttered, rather than said—



"*Gott strafe England!*"

I had read in *Le Matin* a description of the naval battle of the North Sea. So, to loosen his tongue, I exclaimed—

"It seems you gave the English a good smack up by Denmark."

The financier fell into the trap.

"Yes. A good smack. There can be no doubt of that. We might have come out of it worse. To be sure, it's true we lost the flagship and other vessels. But all is going on as usual. The blockade continues. And provisions aren't getting cheaper. Not even money will buy what is needful."

"We shall see if Batocki will settle this question," said the advocate.

"Who is Batocki?" I asked.

"A great mind. A very scientific man, an organizer, who has undertaken to solve the food problem."

"But they have killed all the pigs!" cried the drysalter. "That was nonsensical! They said they ate the potatoes! What is your opinion?"

"In one of the camps I was in," I replied, "there were splendid pigs. We reared a great many pigs. Then it turned out that they belonged to a contractor."

"Abuses!" protested the drysalter. "God knows whom those animals were intended for!"

"And when do you think the war will end?" I asked, assuming a completely ingenuous expression.

They were silent. After a few moments of silence the advocate said—

"They used to say it would be over once Verdun was taken. But that's a thing of the past. To-day they say we shan't have peace in less than a year."

"We want only to defend ourselves!" asserted the financier. "You tell them that very plainly in Spain. We are a pacific nation and only ask that no one shall attack us. We were attacked. They fell upon us—Russians, Serbians, English, French. And in the end the Italians too. We are fighting against the whole world, which desires the ruin of Germany."

This made me indignant.

"If you will allow me," I said, with energy, "I can give you some information on that head."

"Tell us!" they replied in chorus.

I told them what I had seen at Valenciennes, of the pacifism of the French people, as much, in short, as I knew of the beginnings of the war.

They listened to me in some astonishment. Then the financier solemnly declared—

"We wish no harm to the French. They are within their right in endeavouring to take Alsace and Lorraine from us. But England is responsible for everything. Our Chancellor has said so."

I had no wish to continue the argument.

"And where are you going?" I asked.

"We believe we are going to Champagne, but we are not certain," said the advocate.

I understood that he did not wish to give precise details as to the point for which they were making.

"We are of the same battalion," declared the financier. "It is hard to fight when one has an assured position," he declared.

They sighed. The drysalter resumed—

"Obviously it was better in my shop than in the trenches. But there is nothing else for it. And all the fault of the English, who have sworn to make an

end of us ! But they will not do it ! Every German will perish first ! ”

He looked at his companions as if asking for their approval. They nodded their heads in confirmation.

The other soldiers, who did not understand French, were whispering among themselves. Probably they were surprised by the animated conversation which their comrades were holding with a prisoner of war.

Finally one of them spoke a few words to the advocate.

The latter threw himself back and laughed. He pointed to me with his finger and spoke for some minutes. Then all began to look at me with great curiosity.

“ They thought you were French,” the advocate informed me. “ I have just told them about your case.”

We came to a station. They all rose and took leave of me and the policeman.

The financier, when he had reached the platform, approached the window and said to me, under his breath—

“ When the war is over, if they don't kill me, I shall return to Paris and then I shall go to Spain.”

They moved away and I lost sight of them. When the train started once more I began to write hurriedly with a pencil in my note-book, endeavouring to contrive so that the policeman should not see what I was doing. But he continued to take no notice of me.

When we reached Lindau they wanted to search me in the station itself. The policeman, from what I could deduce, told them that I had already been searched in Munich.

Certainly they did not empty my pockets. And

thanks to this I was able to take to Spain, together with my letters and my note-book, a few articles of no importance, among which figured a piece of K.K. bread.

A soldier took charge of me and led me to the quay beside Lake Constance.

With what delight did I contemplate that stretch of water, which marked the limits of German territory ! I was about to cross it, and then I should be free. I should be able to return to my own country, embrace my parents, sleep in a soft bed, eat wholesome and well-seasoned food, and enjoy quiet sleep.

I took a ticket, which cost me a franc and a half, and went on board the steamer. It was a Swiss vessel. The soldier remained on the quay, watching me.

The deck was full. As I was dressed like a prisoner of war, with an armlet, my presence caused a great deal of speculation. The captain came up to me and shook hands with me. He thought me a Frenchman.

"Be easy !" he bade me, genially. "The Germans can do nothing to you now !"

"Oh !" I replied, "so long as I am not in Switzerland . . ."

He laughed. He took me to a sort of canteen, and gave me coffee with milk and pastries. I thanked him, but I could eat nothing. I was as one demented. I found it impossible to keep still. I marched from one side of the deck to the other, and did nothing but ask—

"But when do we start ?"

At last the vessel started. The Lindau quay receded and grew smaller and smaller. I watched as the vessel crossed the lake, stamping with impatience.

It still seemed to me that a German vessel was about to emerge from Lindau, in order to detain us and force me to return to Germany.

Finally, when I saw that we were close to the Swiss shore, I began to clap my hands for joy. I sang songs in Catalan. I believe I even danced the Sardana.

The people looked on at my extreme behaviour without much surprise. No doubt they were used to such spectacles.

I heard one lady say to another, in French—

“How delighted that prisoner is!”

“I am not a prisoner now!” I cried.

“I see you are not,” she replied, in a good-natured way.

“And I never ought to have been one,” I added.

A bald, elderly German, with smoked glasses, approached me curiously, and asked me—

“And why ought you never to have been one?”

“Because I am a neutral! Because I am a Spaniard!” I cried, almost shaking my fists in his eyes. “Your countrymen kept me prisoner for twenty-one months, and gave me a bayonet-wound, and inflicted every kind of horror on me! But I shall protest! And my Government will back me up! And they will give me back my two trunks, and the thousands of francs which they took from me at Valenciennes, nearly two years ago!”

He retreated. I was almost hoarse. A number of people had surrounded us, and were commenting upon my remarks with pity and anger.

The steamer stopped. I took leave of the worthy Swiss captain and we disembarked. I took a ticket for Berne, which cost me 11·80 francs.

I was in Switzerland at last! . . . My nervousness

of a while before was followed by a sort of stupefaction. My head was whirling. It seemed impossible to me that I had reached the end of my captivity; yet nothing was more certain. I could come and go, could do as I pleased, and there was no one to interfere with me, no one to club me on the head or punish me with the cells; there was no policeman to follow me, to fix his eyes on me, ready to restrain my liberty. . . . I had left it all behind on the other shore of Lake Constance: the Germany of Zossen-Bensdorf, Chemnitz, and Gross-Poritsch; the Germany of the Dresden gaol, and the K.K. bread. . . .

My story had travelled from mouth to mouth. A number of passengers who, like myself, were going to Berne—Swiss, Italians, Germans—gathered round me, asked me questions, and gave me cigarettes. I noted that the Germans were anxious, by showing themselves gracious to me, to make themselves agreeable to the subjects of other nations.

I entered the train for Berne. During the journey I had to give the people in my compartment a brief account of my adventures. All sympathized with me, and advised me to claim indemnification.

At twelve minutes past midnight we arrived in Berne.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM SWITZERLAND TO SPAIN

In Berne—Señor Quer—Señor Reinoso—The Duke of Alba—"Tell them in Spain"—Lyons—A camp of German prisoners—What a difference!—A commission fulfilled—Cette—The dinner-hour—Mental comparisons—In Spain—Along Las Ramblas—The end.

How soundly I slept in my Berne hotel! The bed was not very soft, compared to those we have in Spain, but to me, after the filthy straw of the German camps, it seemed incredibly downy. When I got between the white sheets I did not know what was happening to me. White sheets! Pillows! Silence and solitude! A comfortable room in a free, hospitable city! Everything was strange to me. Several times I asked myself if I was not dreaming, if I should not wake up at Gross-Poritsch and find myself surrounded by my companions in misfortune.

Next day I took a bath, breakfasted, and in my prisoner's clothes—I had no others—I presented myself at the Spanish Legation. The third secretary, Señor Quer, received me very amiably, and to him I told my adventures. He presented me to the Minister, Señor Reinoso, a gentleman very highly thought of, a true honour to the Spanish *corps diplomatique*. If all our representatives abroad were like Señor Reinoso the reputation of our country would



gain very greatly thereby. But I do not wish to speak of depressing or disagreeable matters here.

By chance the Duke of Alba was in the Legation, an aristocrat whose behaviour to me was most gracious. He asked me many questions, and was manifestly, as a Spaniard, highly indignant at hearing of my captivity.

I was a week in Switzerland. (Two days I spent in Geneva, in the house of Mme. Voisin, wife of the Sub-Director of the *Crédit Lyonnais*.) I knew a fair number of Spaniards of good standing who were in the adjacent cantons.

From one of these, the son of a personage brought into prominence by the present situation, I received the following advice—

“Go to Spain, and when you meet one of those countrymen of ours who believe that the Germans adore us, tell him what they have done to you.”

I set out for Lyons, as I had promised to visit the family of one of my companions in captivity, a prisoner at Gross-Poritsch, and to give them certain messages.

This family naturally gave me a good reception. They begged me to stay and enjoy their hospitality for several days. But I was in a hurry to find myself in Spain, and to embrace my parents.

Nevertheless, on hearing that there was, close to Lyons, a camp of German prisoners, I expressed a desire to see it, and my friends took the necessary steps.

Provided with the requisite permit, I spent some hours in the camp in question. I saw the whole of it. I conversed with several of the prisoners. And I was able broadly to make a comparison.



What cleanliness ! What abundance ! How much more comfortable the huts were ! How plentiful the water ! How ruddy these men were !

The immense majority of them were plump and had a good colour; they had recovered from the hardships of the campaign, and were calmly awaiting the hour of peace. The French authorities allowed them to govern themselves and administer their own affairs as they pleased. They gave them the same rations as those issued to the French soldiers. They ate white bread, and meat. They drank beer. And above all, they suffered no ill-treatment. Excepting liberty, they had everything, and it was easy to see that they were contented, that they blessed the hour in which they had exchanged the horrors of the trench for the peaceful quiet of the Lyons camp.

Those who did not present such a good appearance were those who had just arrived. One could distinguish merely by the briefest ocular examination between those who had been some time in the camp and those who were recent prisoners. There was one very fat, very shiny German, with a big red moustache, who was always smiling. I had a talk with him. He told me he was taken prisoner at the beginning of the battle of the Marne. You could see as much in his face.

And I, witnessing this peace, this hygiene, this humanity, sadly recollected my twenty months of horrible sufferings; the days and the nights at Zossen-Bunsdorf, with its water-logged molehills; the days and nights at Chemnitz, with its raving typhus patients; the days and nights at Gross-Poritsch, with its stifling barracks . . .

I took leave of my friend's family, leaving them somewhat consoled, and proceeded to Cette.

On the day of my arrival there I visited the mole. Some German prisoners were working on this, who had asked to be allowed to work in some way, that they might save some money and be enabled to send help to their families.

I approached them, profiting by the fact that it was their dinner-hour. They were feeding in the open air, and appeared very contented. They had white bread and other food, but the white bread appeared to please them more than anything. They were munching at it gluttonously. They gazed at it before cutting it, almost with veneration.

They told me that they were given beer daily and wine three times a week. The matter of the beer seemed to possess great importance for them. They made me note the fact several times with an almost infantile delight.

I reached Barcelona and hastened to embrace my parents. I shall not depict their delight nor my emotion. I am hard by nature, and work and suffering have made me unimpressionable. Nevertheless, I wept.

I was still dressed as a prisoner. And in this guise I passed along Las Ramblas. I did not know there were so many Germans in Barcelona. Some of those who saw me stopped and began to whisper. No one spoke to me.

I went to Madrid in order to lodge my complaint at the Ministry of State. I asked that my two trunks should be returned to me, with my money, and that I should be indemnified. I believe I have a right to both things. And I am confident that the Spanish

Government will not fail me, but will support my claim with all possible energy and efficacy.

I will make an end. I have tried always to be truthful, and to relate nothing unless I recollected it plainly and in every detail. My narrative is badly written, because I am a working-man, who, although he has managed to educate himself, and has seen the world, and has known plenty of suffering, is lacking in the qualities of a writer. But he who does what he can deserves forgiveness if his capacities are not of equal stature with his intention.

What I have said is the truth, the truth which my eyes beheld, which my body and my mind endured. No person worthy of respect can contradict me! All I have written I would confirm with my blood!

VALENTIN TORRAS.



## APPENDICES





1. Valentin Torras in prisoner's uniform.

# Kriegsgefangen

2. Brassard of the war prisoner's uniform.

COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE  
GENÈVE  
AGENCE INTERNATIONALE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE



INTER ARMA CARITAS



Franc de Port.

Monsieur Valentin. Corras  
c/o Baraque 3 A N° 2965  
Gefangenenlager Gross-Pritzsch  
bei Rittau (Saxe)

3. Letter from the Red Cross Committee in Geneva.





INTER ALMA CARITAS

COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

AGENCE INTERNATIONALE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

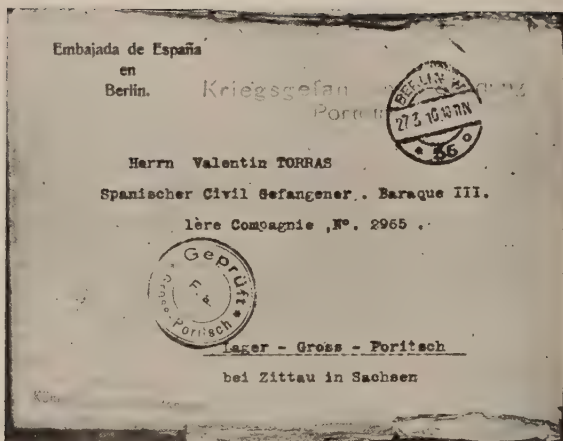
Genève, le 5 février 1916

Monsieur,

En réponse à votre demande du 15 janvier 1915, nous vous remercions de vous adresser directement à l'Ambassade d'Espagne à Berlin, qui sera mieux à même que nous, de vous donner satisfaction. Sans l'espoir que par cette voie vous obtiendrez facilement les papiers qui vous sont nécessaires, nous vous prions d'agréer, Monsieur, l'assurance de nos sentiments distingués.

En-joint votre carte du 15/1-16

3. Letter from the Red Cross Committee in Geneva



4. Letter from the Spanish Embassy in Berlin.



*Embajada de España*  
EN BERLIN

L'Ambassade de S.M. à Berlin , se référant à la carte postale que vous avez adressée au Comité de la Croix rouge International de Genève , a le plaisir de vous annoncer l'envoi - par mandat postal la somme de DIX Marcs , comme secours , en vous priant d'envoyer un reçu en double de ladite somme .

En même temps , l'Ambassade fait le nécessaire pour obtenir votre mise en liberté.  
Berlin le 25 Mars 1915

*Polo*

Monsieur Valentin Torras  
Lager Gross - Poritsch bei Zittau  
in Sachsen .

(Spanischer Civil Gefangener. -  
Baraque III lère Compagnie. No. 2965  
A.

[illegible]

Kriegs-Gefangenen-Lager  
Gross-Poritsch  
bei Zittau in Sachsen

Feldpostkarte  
Kriegsgefangen

A. 11 3265

Compagnie 3  
Saragat

France Internationale  
Prisonniers de Guerre  
Zittau (Saxe)

Geneve  
Suisse

G. R. 31. 10. 0

26 1. 16. 2-3N

5. Postcard sent by Torras to the Red Cross Committee in Geneva.

# Mission Catholique Suisse

EN FAVEUR DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

15, Rue de la Navigation  
GENÈVE

24. Janv. 1916

Monsieur le Prisonnier.

J'ai reçu votre lettre et j'en  
suis très ému. Je la transmets à la Supérieure  
des Oeuvres de Charité. Elle en a été  
très bien, car les réponses sont  
sans cesse. Quant aux livres  
espagnols, je n'en ai pas mais  
vous connaissez si bien le français  
que je vais jeter quelques petites  
brochures en français au billet collé  
que je vous envoie. Je vous  
recommande de bien vous en servir  
pour ne pas vous en servir trop.  
Sans cesse bientôt les nouvelles

M. le Prisonnier

S. S. Bernard

M. le Prisonnier

6. Letter from the Swiss Catholic Mission for  
Prisoners of War.

17 Fevris.  
 Cher enfant. Hier je  
 t'ai vivement appelée  
 un colli, en sachant entre  
 cette indication que c'est  
 toujours toi, j'ai mis un  
 peu de thé en sachet et de  
 sucre et je t'envoie  
 Delhaye. Ce jour je t'ai  
 une carte de lui <sup>de la fin de la guerre</sup> et un colli  
 un colli très probablement  
 pour remplacer ceux que  
 sans avoir de recevoir  
 t'auras enfant. sans t'en  
 faire peur. Courage  
 je ne t'oublierai pas.  
 Bien maternellement  
 Mlle. C.

Mlle.  
 Cœurdaier  
 Triffling  
 reine



No. Carras 2969  
 1- camp baraque 3  
 camp de Gross-Portsch  
 bei Zittau Saxe

7. Letter from Mlle. Cœurdaier.

M. Weiss

Perpignan

31 Mars 76.

Mais, avons écrit à Monsieur  
votre père et donne l'ite achève -

Nous les envoies par  
l'intermédiaire d'une manane  
un lot de Pâques et mis  
dans Monsieur <sup>les envoies</sup> pour vous  
de bonne santé - d'a <sup>de la</sup> <sup>bonne</sup> <sup>manane</sup>

Pendant votre séjour

Philadelphie le 10 Avril 1815

A Monsieur

Carras Valentin

et Compagnie. n. 236

Quai. Briton. au Port  
- Labien.

Mon cher Lillan,

Voilà Pâques et le printemps  
et je ne voudrais pas laisser passer  
une fête aussi solennelle sans vous  
remercier un coin afin que vous  
célériez joyeusement la Fête de  
le renouveau.

Tout m'écrit et n'est ce pas



- et vous m'immerez ce que conte-  
- nait le paquet et si il vous est  
parvenu en bon état.

Moules. Je me dire aussi si  
vous avez de la famille et de  
quelle région vous êtes. Moi je  
suis d'Algérie, de l'Algérie  
dans le département de Constantine.  
Connaissez-vous ce beau pays? Nous  
avons en ce moment un temps  
superbe et le bleu du ciel fait  
mal à voir. Nous serons bientôt  
en été car ici cette saison est  
tricolore.

Je m'arrête là pour  
aujourd'hui, mon cher frère  
éprouvez-moi bien vite. Toute

ma famille se joint à moi  
à vous envoyer toutes ses bonnes  
amitiés.

Notre marraine des  
sœurs de Caen vous serre  
cordialement la main.

J. Lopes

Mlle J. Lopes. rue Nationale  
Orléans.  
(Algérie)



10. Valentin Torras. Photographed in Berne,  
July 1916.



11. Valentin Torras. Photographed in Madrid,  
August 1916.

## II

### THE DOCUMENTS TRANSLATED

#### DOCUMENT No. 3

##### *Reply from the Red Cross Committee, Geneva*

International Committee of the  
Red Cross.  
International Agency for  
Prisoners of War.

GENEVA, 5 February, 1916.

SIR,

In reply to your request of the 15 January, 1915, we advise you to apply directly to the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin, who will be even better able than we are to give you satisfaction.

Hoping that in this way you will readily obtain the papers which you require, we beg you to accept, Sir, etc., etc.

International Committee of the Red Cross,  
GENEVA.

Agency for Prisoners of War.

Enclosed is your letter of 15/1/16.

#### DOCUMENT No. 4

##### *First letter to the Spanish Embassy*

Spanish Embassy,  
Berlin.

The Ambassador of Spain in Berlin, with reference to the post card which you addressed to the Inter-

national Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva, has pleasure in advising you of the dispatch—by postal order—of the sum of TEN marks, as relief, and begs you to send a receipt in duplicate for the said sum.

At the same time the Ambassador is doing what is necessary to obtain your restoration to liberty.

Berlin, the 25 March, 1915.

POLO.

M. Valentin Torras,  
Lager Gross-Poritsch bei Zittau  
in Sachsen.

(Civilian Spanish prisoner—  
Barrack No. III, 1st Company, No. 2965.  
A.)

NOTE.—This was the first card from Señor Polo which Torras received at Gross-Poritsch.

## DOCUMENT No. 5

### *Letter from Torras to the Red Cross*

Gross-Poritsch, 15/1/16.

MR. PRESIDENT,

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated the 27/12/15, which has given me much pleasure. I am depending on your kindness in asking you if you could obtain for me my papers of citizenship, for the German authorities do not believe my statement that I am a Spaniard; in order to procure these papers you could apply to the Civil Governor of Barcelona, or to the Mayor of that city. Here are the data which you will need: I was born on the 4th of October, 1879, in the Condals factory, parish of San Miguel de Castellgali, district of Manresa, province of Barcelona, Spain. I accomplished my military service in the year 1899, in the regiment of

Isabel II, 4th Company, Valladolid. My father, Marcos Torras, is porter of the Barcelona gaol.

*Recevez, Monsieur, etc.,*

VALENTIN TORRAS.

NOTE.—This letter was drafted by a French prisoner, as Torras, of course, does not write correct French, although he speaks it with fluency. The Red Cross replied to this letter by Document 3, of which we have given a translation.

### DOCUMENT No. 6

#### *Letter from Sor St. Bernard to Torras*

Swiss Catholic Mission  
for the  
Protection of Prisoners of War.  
15, Rue de la Navigation,  
Geneva.

24 January, 1916.

MONSIEUR TORRAS (VALENTIN),

I have received your letter and I have made the request to the Superior of the Sisters of Charity.

It is necessary to have a little patience, as replies are a long time coming. As for Spanish books, I have none, but you know French so well that I am going to add a few little books in French to the small parcel which I am sending you. I recommend you to pray thoroughly to the good God that all may go well and that you may soon receive news.

Good wishes,

SOR ST. BERNARD.

Service of the Necessitous.

NOTE.—Sor St. Bernard wrote to the Superior of the Sisters of Charity at Barcelona asking that his father might be given news of Torras, and that fresh papers of citizenship might be obtained, as the Germans had taken these from Torras at Valenciennes and Mons.

## DOCUMENT No. 7

*Letter from Mlle. Cœurdaçier, of Billancourt (France)*

27 February.

MY DEAR BOY,

Yesterday I sent you a hastily dispatched parcel on receipt of your letter in which you tell me that you are still there. I have put a little tea, in a little bag, and some sugar; you will drink it with Delhayé. To-day I have received a letter from him dated the end of January. I shall send you a parcel very soon to replace the one you ought to have received. Poor boy! So you are still there! Courage! I shall not forget you.

Very maternally yours,  
(Initials).

## DOCUMENT No. 8

*Letter from the Paris review, Les Annales*

31 March, 1916.

SIR,

We have written to your father and have given him your address.

We are sending you through a "godmother" a small Easter parcel, and assure you, Monsieur, of our hopes that you are in good health.

Per YVONNE SARCEY,  
Secretary.

## DOCUMENT No. 9

*Letter from Mlle. Lopes, of Philippeville (Algeria)*

PHILIPPEVILLE, 10 April, 1916.

Señor Torras (Valentin), 1st Company, No. 2965,  
Gross-Poritsch, near Zittau, Saxony.

MY DEAR GODSON,

Here is Easter and the spring-time, and I should not like to let so solemn a feast go by without sending you a parcel, so that you may cheerfully celebrate the Resurrection and the renewal of nature.

You will write to me, will you not? And you will tell me what the parcel contained, and if it reached you in good condition.

Will you also tell me if you have any family, and to what country you belong? I live in Algeria in Philippeville, in the department of Constantine. Do you know this beautiful country? We are having magnificent weather at the present moment, and the blue of the sky hurts one to look at it. We shall soon have the summer, for this season is early here.

I will stop here for to-day, my dear godson. Let me have an answer quite soon. All my family joins me in sending you all good wishes.

Your godmother of the Easter holidays gives you a hearty shake of the hand.

T. LOPES.

Mlle. T. Lopes, rue Nationale,  
Philippeville,  
(Algérie).



### III

#### AN ARTICLE IN *EL LIBERAL*

The first member of the Spanish Press to speak of the sufferings of Torras was the Academician, D. Jacinto Octavio Picón, who published an article in *El Liberal*, which was reprinted by other newspapers. We think this article ought to form part of this book, and we therefore reproduce it here.

I HAVE, since the beginning of the war, been one of those Spanish writers who have written least about this tremendous conflict, both because the just cause is well defended in this country, and because I distrust my own capacity; although I have sincerely expressed my opinion whenever any one has done me the honour of asking it, whether for our own or for foreign periodicals. But one of those instances has come to my notice which enlighten both opinion and the public; and I consider that it is the duty of every citizen to help to remedy iniquity, or at least to make it known, that it may be execrated. It is obvious that the remedy will not be easy, but I shall ensure that those who are not blinded by passion understand how neutrals, including Spaniards, are treated by the troops whose lord and master professes to be regenerating the world by means of the methods of Attila and Genseric, improved and amplified. I am not writing, therefore, because I am anxious for notoriety, but in order that I may

open the eyes of those who, through ignorance and prejudice, cherish the illusion that Prussian militarism is the *beau ideal* of human justice; and also in order that whosoever is officially appointed may determine, when he proceeds to action, to remonstrate against this stupendous outrage. Here are the facts—

Valentin Torras y Closa, a native of Manresa, of some thirty-odd years, was working in Valenciennes two years ago, as a mechanician, earning good wages in a French manufactory of railway material (rolling-stock). On the 25th of August, 1914, the Germans appeared, occupying the city without a struggle, since it contained no garrison. Nevertheless, they arrested various Frenchmen and foreigners, and among the latter was Torras.

On the following day a Prussian officer before whom Torras was made to appear ordered him to work in a shop in which the locomotives employed by the invaders were repaired. This the Spanish artisan, who is certainly as moderate as he is intelligent, roundly refused to do, stating that he was a subject of a neutral country and that he neither could nor would lend himself to such a course. He was then asked for the documents proving his Spanish nationality, and he produced his certificate of baptism, his certificate of personality, and the permit of residence required by every foreigner in France who lives by the work of his hands.

The officer left him, presently returned, and demanded his luggage.

Torras took him into his room, where he was ordered to open his trunks, and a list was made of all they contained: papers, books, clothes and

jewellery; when the officer, declaring that everything was confiscated, and informing Torras that he would depart immediately, first to Berlin and then to Switzerland, whence he could return to Spain, made him give up his keys, on the pretext that his things would have to be examined once more at the frontier. On this same day, the 26th, Torras was sent to Mons (Belgium), where he arrived on the 27th, having been put into a train of French and Belgian prisoners, both soldiers and civilians. Their destination was Zossen (Prussia), a camp in which some 15,000 prisoners, French, Belgians, Russians, and Arabs, lived without the shelter of barracks. He asked several times that he might be allowed to write to the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin, and to his family, and was refused permission. Shortly afterwards the Ambassador paid a visit to this camp, and Torras, in order that he should not speak to him, was imprisoned in a cell, where he remained until the 19th of December, on which day the Germans let him out, saying that he was not Spanish, but French, in view of which he was sent to Chemnitz (Saxony), where a captain on two occasions promised to discover who he was.

In January 1915 he was called up before a lieutenant, by name D'Avignon, who gave him the astounding information that he was neither Spanish nor French, but Portuguese, and showed him a document consisting of several folios, which was drafted in German, and which referred to a Portuguese subject, and demanded that Torras should sign it, thereby admitting that he was the person mentioned in the document. Three times Torras refused, and as many times the lieutenant, revolver

in hand, pretended to threaten him, and, being unable to intimidate him, called to a soldier, to whom he said something in German. Not understanding this language, Torras does not know whether the officer did or did not give the order to maltreat him; but whether in obedience or upon his own inspiration, the soldier gave him a bayonet-thrust in the neck, causing a wound which took six weeks to heal, and of which a cicatrix still remains.

Torras continued to ask that he might write to the Ambassador of his country, and to his home, and the Germans continued to deny him permission "because he was a Portuguese."

In September 1915 a register of prisoners was made, and when it came to our countryman's turn it appeared that he had already been registered as a Portuguese, which was absurd, as no one had proved his Portuguese descent; they showed him his pretended *dossier*, and of course the description of the Portuguese to whom it referred did not correspond with his. Nevertheless, on this occasion Torras found some consolation; it seems as though common sense is a thing so subtle that it can find its way even through German discipline; for a sergeant told him that he understood that the whole thing was nonsense, but that he had to obey orders. Next month Torras was transferred to Gross-Poritsch (Saxony), where a companion in captivity—a Frenchman—advised him not to make any more protests to the Germans, but to write to the Marquis de Villa-Urrutia, Spanish Ambassador in Paris, when he, who made light of the vigilance of the Germans, would undertake to forward the letter. They wrote to the diplomatist, taking the precaution not to

mention his title on the envelope, but only his name; and as fate willed it, the card reached its destination, and the Embassy began to take steps; but Torras, with natural impatience, wrote in the following January to the "Franco-Belgian Red Cross" as well, and this returned his letter to him, telling him that he should apply to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin, and from that time onwards it assisted him weekly by sending him four pounds of bread and a parcel of preserved foods. Torras replied to the "Red Cross" that he was not allowed to apply to the Ambassador in question, as the Germans were still insisting that he was a Portuguese; the "Red Cross" applied to the Spanish Legation in Switzerland, and the protest was forwarded to our Ambassador in Berlin.

On the 25th of March, 1916, Señor Polo de Bernabé wrote to him that he was making a protest, and sent him ten marks. Afterwards Torras received a letter from the same Embassy, enclosing his certificate of baptism, countersigned by the German Consul at Barcelona, which settled the prisoner's paternity; but the Germans stated that it was false, and on the 6th of March they placed before his eyes the very document which they had read to him at Chemnitz, in order that he might examine it and declare that he was a Portuguese, but they committed the absurd mistake of leaving among these papers a communication dispatched on the 15th of April by the Spanish Minister of State to the Ambassador in Berlin, instructing him to demand that Torras should be set at liberty, and also that he should be indemnified. Torras was subjected to a further examination concerning his nationality, means of livelihood, etc.,

and was again required to sign the declaration. This he refused to do, stating that he would sign a document written in French or Spanish; he would not sign the document drawn up in German, as he did not understand it. Then he was threatened with hard labour and forbidden to continue his complaints that he was a Spaniard, as he was a Portuguese.

On the 20th of June a representative of the Spanish Ambassador visited the prisoners' camp at Gross-Poritsch—a medical man from Valencia, whose name we regret we do not know—and, as was natural, Torras attempted to speak to him; but the military commandant of the camp gave him a violent push, so that he should not approach the visitor. Torras, nevertheless, found time to shout: "See how a Spaniard is treated here!" No doubt the physician heard him, for shortly afterwards Torras was informed that the representative of his country wanted to speak to him; but the Germans were certainly determined to prevent the interview, since after making the prisoner wait for some hours they asserted that the doctor had discovered that he was a Portuguese and had stated that there was no need to listen to him. Fortunately the doctor, who must be a man diligent and reliable in the accomplishment of his duty, while continuing his visit to the camp had learned from other prisoners—who were punished accordingly—that there was a fellow-countryman of his in the camp, and asked that he should be introduced to him, finally securing the interview in the commandant's office; first in the presence of the latter; but then, as the physician requested, the two Spaniards were left alone; and the physician, quickly persuaded that Torras was a Spaniard, paid him

twenty marks, with a promise to send him more, and to proceed without loss of time to lodge the necessary complaint in Berlin.

It is a melancholy fact that the liberator, for the moment, played the part of Don Quixote, when the latter wrested the youthful Andrés from the brutal hands of Juan Haldudo; the Germans did not pound their prisoner with cudgel-blows, as the latter did his servant, but they clapped him into a cell, where he remained for a week on a diet of bread and water, after which time he was taken before a captain who promised him his liberty if he would sign a document declaring three things: first, that he had been made prisoner that he might be kept out of danger (whereas there had been no fighting in the locality where he was arrested); secondly, that if his imprisonment was prolonged it was because he tried to pass for a Portuguese; and thirdly, that he would promise not to ask for indemnification; that is, he was asked to subscribe to two monstrous lies and to agree to a precaution of an economic character. Torras refused to sign.

The Germans must have known that steps were still being taken with a view to his liberation, for on the 30th of June they released him from his cell, sending him on the 1st of July to the Dresden gaol; on the 3rd he was taken to the Spanish Consulate in that city, where the Consul declared that he was awaiting instructions from our Ambassador in Berlin, and requested the policeman who accompanied Torras that the latter should be taken to a hotel at the expense of the Consulate.

This request being refused, Torras returned to the gaol until the 7th, when, being once more taken



before the Consul, the latter gave him ninety marks and a passport. He was about to be set free! More than unwillingly the Germans released him, but even so he was once more taken to the gaol that he might be photographed in half a dozen poses. On the 9th they allowed him to take a ticket from Dresden to Lindau, the last German station on the way to Switzerland; but on passing through Munich, on the morning of the 10th, he was once more taken to the gaol. Finally they definitely released him; he passed through Lindau, reached Berne at midnight, and on the following day called, in his prisoners' uniform, at our Legation, when the secretary, Señor Quer, presented him to our Minister, Señor Reinoso, to whom he told the story of his captivity. There he also met a duke, a grandee of Spain, well known for his culture and his love of the arts, the son of that unforgettable duchess to whom our period owes those priceless books of which she made so generous a gift.

A few days later, after fulfilling, in Lyons, a pious commission with which a French prisoner had entrusted him in respect of his family, Torras arrived in Barcelona, and afterward proceeded to Madrid.

To sum up: a Spaniard was arbitrarily imprisoned by the Germans from the 26th of September, 1914, to the 10th of July, 1916, being treated as a prisoner of war until the 1st of July, 1916, when he was shut up for ten days more in civil gaols.

There will be those who believe that such things are "incidents of warfare"; but there will also be those who will protest against those who commit such a cruel violation of justice. Neutrality must



not degenerate into shameful abjectness. Where the king—and he who speaks is a republican—sets the “admirable and humane example” of protecting foreign prisoners, the Government cannot forsake a Spaniard.

*30th July, 1916.*

## IV

### AFTERWORD BY THE EDITOR

#### I

So far Torras has spoken. He has spoken for himself, and has told us what happened to him in Flanders, in Germany, and in Switzerland. His narrative, as the reader will have seen, conveys the intense emotion of the tragic truth.

A level-headed man, not given to rancour, Torras is not prodigal of adjectives. He simply relates, and leaves each reader to make such comment as he pleases. This individual comment, born of the conscience, will have set its avenging rubric against each of the episodes of his Calvary.

Let us consider who Torras is, for then that human document, his narrative, will acquire for our eyes its full and pre-eminent value as a revelation and a symptom. Torras is one of those Catalan working-men who constitute a sort of aristocracy within the Spanish proletariat. An admirable mechanic, often acting as engineer's assistant, thirsting for culture and for fresh horizons, Valentin Torras was able to note many details which would have been unobserved by another man of less intellectual sensibility. Travel, the knowledge of a foreign language, the constant reading of books and periodicals, the almost continual contact with persons of a superior social

position, have whetted his faculty of observation, and, at the same time, have tempered his mind. Even in his crises of despair he was never deserted by hope. But this hope was not supermundane. He did not put his trust in divine intervention exclusively. He reasoned, resisted, and manœuvred, straining all his mental and spiritual faculties, and at last he succeeded in opening the doors of his prison.

But fresh hardships and anxieties were in store for him. Dresden, with its gaol, warned him that as long as he remained in Germany he could not be sure of his liberty; and Munich was, as it were, the last thunderclap of the departing tempest; it was the scene of a supreme fear, a final anguish, which oppressed his heart. But he triumphed. He received permission to go forward. Lindau, the Lake of Constance, the Swiss steamer, the Helvetian shore, Berne. . . . How deeply his jubilant reflections touch us! Poor persecuted victim, maltreated and imprisoned, deprived of his very personality! . . . He becomes a man once more. Already he is no longer a mere number. And the victim bethinks himself, looks behind him, and serenely, divesting himself of anger, spiritually naked, he passes judgment upon his torturers. His accusation is formidable precisely because it is devoid of racial, moral, and spiritual prejudice. Valentin Torras is Man, Man who sums up in his person all the offences committed against Humanity by a caste which of a people has made, not a civilized nation, not a national organism at the service of the great undying ideals, but a mass of iron which strikes unconsciously.

Torras is a Spaniard, that is to say, a neutral in the purest acceptation of the idea which this word

represents. It may be said that he is *the* Neutral, essential and potential, the symbolic Neutral, somewhat amazed, considerably bewildered and astray, surprised by events, and preoccupied above all with his own salvation. And this inoffensive Neutral finds himself suddenly caught in the wheels of the great destructive machine which was silently crossing the Rhine.

This machine tortured his flesh and his spirit. But he discovered its secret. He discovered it at Mons, in Cologne, at Zossen-Bunsdorf, at Chemnitz, and at Gross-Poritsch, and the final revelation—as far as it was lacking—came when the train which bore him toward liberty was rolling through Bavaria, from Munich to Lindau. . . .

## II

Why did Torras refuse to work for the Germans at the Valenciennes station? For reasons of two kinds, equally weighty.

Torras is a man who does not like to have the course of his life interrupted. But the war is a gigantic episode; of extreme complexity, yet an episode, nothing more. He believed, with all those who surrounded him, that the struggle would last for a few months, that after a few horrible battles peace would establish its empire over a shuddering and bloodstained Europe.

He considered it impossible that nations could succumb; he was of opinion that the territorial exchanges which might come about would not fundamentally alter the map. Valenciennes would still be French. And he would go on working in Valenciennes.

How could he show himself day after day, week after week, to the people of this city, now a fragment of the immense German organism? How could he repay the hospitality of France, his generously remunerated labour, his economic independence, by a betrayal of this kind? Torras was thinking of the morrow. He saw himself in Valenciennes, surrounded by hatred. All would point the finger at him. He would be the foreigner who helped the Germans, who repaired the locomotives which were assisting in the invasion. Torras recoiled from such a prospect.

Moreover, he believed in his right as a neutral. His country was on friendly terms with Germany. The Spanish flag protected him. No one would dare to force him to do what he did not wish to do; and when the German officer ordered him, with asperity, to place himself at the disposal of Germany, Torras quietly produced his papers. . . .

A trusting creature! An innocent, ingenuous mind! He had heard some vague mention of the Hague Conferences, of the rights guaranteed to the peaceful subjects of non-belligerent States. He did not know that a Theory had arisen, like a blood-red sun, and that this Theory denied all things anterior to it. Monstrously explicit, this Theory admitted only that which gave it consistency and vigour. Laws, international treaties, customs, considerations of justice and humanity, all went down before the German Act. A demented Superman had seen, in his delirium, a Super-nation. And this Super-nation, intoxicated with pride, judged itself to be above good and evil.

On the one hand the Theory. On the other Valentin Torras. The tempest and the blade of grass.

And when we consider this opposition—momentary, yet a summary of the entire conflict which we are now beholding—we are forced to ask how it is that Torras is still living. For Torras miraculously escaped.

The German officer spoke in the interests of Germany. Torras relied on a few documents. And Bethmann-Hollweg, the Imperial Chancellor, had already stated that treaties were “scraps of paper,” and that one need not trouble to respect them. . . .

Of course, as life is a fabric of facts or agreements, and as these agreements are recorded by means of written words, there could be nothing before us, were Bethmann-Hollweg right, but a return to the state of savagery. So Torras reasoned. For he quietly held out to the German officer the proofs of his citizenship and identity, just as Belgium offered Von Emmich the Treaty which guaranteed her neutrality.

### III

And now let us look into the cause of the blunder. The officer told Torras, after taking charge of his papers and his money, and having his luggage removed to Valenciennes station, that he was to be sent to the Swiss frontier. Nevertheless, Torras was flung into a prisoners' train at Mons.

Here there is something unintelligible. Who was this officer? Torras does not know. Torras noted that his captor had transferred him to a comrade. And this comrade, by all indications, confined himself to fulfilling a commission. The initial outrage is therefore aggravated. Let us seek for the person

responsible. The person responsible is the officer who sought out Torras in his Valenciennes lodgings. Undoubtedly it was known to the *Kommandantur* that an artisan, a mechanician, was to be found in a house in the Faubourg de Paris. This artisan was a Spaniard. No matter. When Germany is faced by a necessity neutrals must obey; the Super-nation sees none but slaves beyond its frontiers.

So the officer went to the house where Torras was lodging. He met with a resistance which left him amazed. What? A mere Catalan working-man resisting and thwarting the German will?

Such an absurd rebellion called for an exemplary punishment.

And in the officer's mind arose the idea of casting Torras into the abyss of a prisoners' camp. To do this, he had only to seize his papers and his money. He had only to trick him, to make his Spanish ingenuousness believe that Germany was undertaking to send him to Switzerland.

Was there an understanding between these two officers—him of Valenciennes and him of Mons? Was the latter acting in good faith?

And what became of the valuables, the clothes, and the thousands of francs belonging to Valentin Torras? The Valenciennes officer remained in possession of these. Were they given in at the *Kommandantur*? But then the *Kommandantur* assumed the responsibility for the outrage. We judge that the *Kommandantur* knew nothing about it.

So far we have been analyzing an act of fraud and violence, executed by an individual. The nations are made up of millions of individuals, good and bad, stupid and intelligent, and it would be unjust to make

them collectively responsible for the actions performed by any of these autonomous individualities.

But when Valentin Torras, having discovered the trick, began to cry aloud for liberty, the responsibility of Germany, as a nation, commenced. And in the sequel Torras will be justified in blaming the German people for his sufferings.

#### IV

Torras's journey from Mons to Zossen-Bunsdorf was like a nightmare. For four mortal days and nights the infernal train proceeded through Belgium and Germany. It was swarming with whole men and wounded, with the slightly sick and the dying. Gangrene had attacked the torn and swollen flesh. With the doors locked and the windows guarded, the moving cattle-trucks became converted into mediæval dungeons.

And during these four days and nights the Germans did not renew the dressings of the wounded, gave them neither food nor water, did not break the journey for repose, did not change the straw on which hundreds of men lay dying. In Cologne, as a demonstration of collective mentality, certain straw-stuffed effigies were seen, swinging from the balconies; they represented French soldiers of various arms. Germany, harsh and militarized, appeared at the very frontier, promising the prisoners a frightful Calvary. At once, in the fields, there were fists which were raised in threats, and mouths which emitted insults. The intoxication of a credulous nation by its rulers, a deed which is admitted even by the most impassioned, was here, in these level plains, awakening a blind



hatred. Why were these old men, these women, these children so excited at the sight of the French, British, and Belgian prisoners?

They did not know. The passions of the multitude were disciplined with meticulous care. It was ordered to hate; in the frontier districts, to form a mental habit of suspicion. The myth was incarnated in a phantom, and this phantom, looming above the horizons of Europe, poisoned them with its murderous vapours.

The prisoner! . . . The treaties say that the prisoner is sacred, and they are right. Armies are concretions of nationalities. They meet and destroy one another. But the fallen soldier, the man who has surrendered, recovers his individuality, which he lost for the time being by merging himself in the terrible Great Whole which is the autonomous military unit. Once the man has fallen to earth, once his hands are raised and his rifle on the ground, only a wretch will insult his misfortune.

But Torras has seen and endured all this. The prisoners and the civilian victims of raids—for the raids were already beginning—were not regarded as human beings. What did it matter if they died in the trucks? They had already figured in the statistics of the Wolff Agency. Nauen had trumpeted from its antennæ, in order that the neutrals might prostrate themselves, humbled, beholding the greatness of Germany the Imperial.

## V

We have said that after Torras had protested in the station at Mons all Germany was responsible

for the outrage which was committed. Persistence identified it with the officer at Valenciennes; it screened him; it assumed his complicity.

There is, in every one of these German officers, these Germans of the classes which enregiment and specialize and impose their hierarchy on every form of activity, a bizarre admixture of violence and shrewd cunning. The spectacled professor and the hieratic and corseted lieutenant, with his insolent stare, form the two aspects of the contemporary Teuton.

It was soon realized, in German military circles, that there was a Spaniard among the prisoners at Zossen. Logic required that this prisoner should be sent back to his own country, with an indemnity, and some sort of explanation. But on the one hand the infallibility of Prussian militarism was concerned; on the other hand was only a poor working-man, born in a distant country of south-western Europe. The crime was persisted in, and an endeavour was made to conceal it by means of a substitution of individuality.

Who was poor Tonio Antuan, taken prisoner, like Torras, at Valenciennes? He was, like Torras, a prisoner at Zossen-Bunsdorf. He had been imprisoned without pretext, since he was a civilian and a neutral. Presently Tonio disappeared. And the *Kommandantur* wished to replace him by Torras.

Why did not Torras also disappear? He did not do so, but what was possible was done. A bayonet-wound, four days of solitary confinement. . . . The Germans had relied on hæmorrhage. But this, more merciful than his torturers, did not accomplish its mission. The Catalan has a strong grip on life. Torras persisted in not dying.

The details of his experiences are truly singular. The commandant of the Zossen-Bunsdorf camp stated that Torras was not a subject of Don Alfonso. But when he knew that the Spanish Ambassador was about to visit his flock, he removed him, and the rumour was that he had been sent to Switzerland. Was he obeying orders? Or was he actuated by a feeling of professional solidarity? And why the farce of liberation? Why should he lie if he, personally, was not guilty, but merely confined himself to guarding the thousands of soldiers which his Government had sent him?

We insist upon this point, because the conduct of the authorities in the camps of Zossen-Bunsdorf, Chemnitz, and Gross-Poritsch proves that Torras was not the victim of an outrage followed by a blunder, as certain patriots of the Press have piously asserted. He was the victim of an outrage and of a complicity which singularly aggravates the case.

Many people have asked themselves what Germany had to gain by keeping Torras a prisoner. She gained nothing, and has lost much. But a super-nation cannot be mistaken, cannot commit a blunder.

Send Torras back to Spain! Confess herself the author, not of a violation of international law—what importance could this possess at the time of the invasion of Belgium?—but of a lamentable imprisonment preceded by a crafty spoliation!

No. Let Torras die; or if he would not die, let him lose his civil identity and assume that of another. Since the bayonet-thrust failed, typhus or starvation would prevent the disgrace of his resurrection. One had only to wait patiently. In the German infernos where thousands of men died weekly,

murdered by anæmia and infection, a Torras ought to disappear. There was no lack of dreadful and convenient Wittenbergs.

But the Spaniard has a capacity for enduring suffering, born, no doubt, of the obligatory sobriety of his race, which permits him to adapt himself to the most varied and difficult situations. The poorly nourished organism, corroded perhaps by slow poisons, offers a surprising resistance to the attacks of the hostile medium. And where the stout and vigorous succumb, the lean and pallid Spaniard maintains the spark of his vitality. It is a matter of nervous force and heredity.

Torras was victorious over epidemics, despair, filth, starvation, nausea, thirst, cold, damp, and wounds. And hardly had he recovered his liberty when his mind recovered equilibrium. So little had they foreseen, in the German camp, this temperamental hardness, which had preserved an accuser in the immanent cause of Justice.

## VI

At Zossen-Bunsdorf, Chemnitz and Gross-Poritsch, Torras witnessed the infliction of corporal punishments.

In his narrative he describes the punishments of the cage, the post, and the knapsack, and notes that the German soldiers regarded these forms of torture without indignation, because their officers placed them in the cage, or bound them to the post, if they were guilty of a mere act of negligence or forgetfulness. How should they pity the prisoners if they themselves could not claim to be privileged in respect of

disciplinary punishment? The Germans could say that in the matter of tortures they had invented little or nothing, but confined themselves to extending to those of their enemies who were refractory the system of punishment current in their country.

In Prussia the tradition of brutality is preserved with the greatest zeal. The caste of the junkers takes no little pride in its perpetuation. Frederic used to say that he made heroes with the rod. It is true that when the Hohenzollerns wished to create, out of nothing, a national army, which was in due time to form the basis of Germany's rising against Napoleon, they abolished corporal punishment. But this abolition was never embodied in action. It finds its way into all the barracks of Germany, and weighs upon the innate docility of the people; and it is a proved fact that of all the armies of the world the German Army holds the record for suicides.

Torras relates an instance worthy of attention. Among the soldiers who guarded the prisoners at Gross-Poritsch was a territorial or soldier of the *landsturm*, a man of mature age, and of education. Certainly this German, in civil life, would have been full of his own importance. Perhaps he was a Herr Professor, one of the pillars of Teutonic *Kultur*. In any case, with his spectacles, his beard, and his abdominal protuberance, he represented the classic type of the German *bourgeois*.

And one day a *feldwebel* considered that he had committed some misdemeanour, and condemned him to the torture of the cage, without considering his career, his belly, his goggles, or his apostolic beard.

And the citizen-soldier bowed his head, entered the narrow space, bristling with spikes, which was to serve as his temporary and well-ventilated prison, and there he remained for some hours, enduring the gaze, half mocking and half compassionate, of thousands of foreigners, who assuredly, notwithstanding their desperate and painful situation, would not have changed places with him. . . .

But the marvels of discipline! For this citizen soldier, when he emerged from his distressingly grotesque prison, had endured no moral crisis. Neither rage, nor shame, nor resentment had disturbed the equanimity of his nerves. His robust stomach, being empty, demanded its accustomed food. And from the cage the soldier marched off to seek his rations, and absorbed them with all the voracity of a German of pure blood.

Torras has described the incident in graphic phrases. These men do not seem in any way to resemble the Western peoples. The fact is that in Germany the concept of personal dignity is so elastic that only when the insult proceeds from an inferior is it revenged with energy and rancour. The superior may insult his inferiors with impunity.

Is the Germanic race incapable of individual rebellion? One might believe it to be so. The Germanic race possesses the gregarious instinct, the instinct of the herd. When it overflowed the Roman world its tribes progressed in a succession of waves. The mass advanced, compact and closely compressed. The individual man did not belong to himself; he was swallowed up in the ocean of sweating, quivering flesh. His individual ego surrendered to the colossal whole, which slowly advanced, crushing all before

it, like a city of ants on the march, or a migration of African locusts.

Spitteler, a Swiss poet of German origin, in one of the lectures which he gave in order to explain his aliaphilia, states that the Germans, before Bismarck, were humble slaves, and that since Bismarck they have been insolent slaves. Slavery—which is abjectness dissimulated—makes them as pliant wax in the hands of their ruling elements, who without difficulty inspire them with respect for hierarchy reinforced by nationalistic vanity. And at the basis of this inflation there is Machiavellianism. The German accepts his servile condition because the idea that he belongs to the super-nation *par excellence* mitigates his spiritual bitterness. He lives amid the rigidity of an absolute *régime*, resting upon a warlike and proprietary caste, and supported by a bureaucracy which enforces on civilian life the granite regulations of the *landsturm*. He is not a citizen, like the Englishman, the Frenchman, or the American; he cannot, like the Muscovite, say that he has not yet emerged from his Middle Ages.

But he finds comfort in considering that in his quality as German, as a cell-component of a race of the elect of the lords of the earth, he has potential rights over those who do not speak German. Read the world-histories of the contemporary Teutonic writers. Through their pages runs the thrilling conviction of the Teutonic sublimity. Everything good has been effected by Germans. The great historical figures which are the pride of the Latin and Slav races, of the independent Anglo-Saxons of the British Isles, and the Scandinavians, were expatriated Germans. Michelangelo is not one of



the glories of Italy. A German philologist has endeavoured to superfœtate an incredible intra-Rhenian ancestry upon him. And so it is in all things. . . .

This national hyperæsthesia is obviously derived from the democratic fury of the multitude. They were made to believe that the secret of greatness was the hierarchical organization, unconditional submission, and veneration of the ruled for the rulers. And the spirit of criticism, of contradiction, and of the analysis of institutions, was stifled by methodology and classification, which were transferred from the university class-room and the laboratory to political science.

The German boy, predisposed to blind obedience by the psychological legacy of his fathers, fell into the deforming hands of the master. And the master prepared him carefully for the barracks. He made a soldier of him, not a citizen; a machine, not a free, courageous volunteer. Truly military life in Germany must be extremely hard when, notwithstanding the existence of so docile and pliable a raw material, thousands of young men kill themselves or deliberately maim themselves every year.

The barracks completes the work of the school. His service in the ranks accomplished, the German enters into civilian life. But even then discipline continues to gag his docile mind. The musical societies, the veterans' societies, Social Democracy, and the Catholic Centre, all take hold of him and convert him into a portion of a complicated piece of machinery. He will demonstrate, vote, drink, and sing when he is ordered to do so. And this explains the phenomenon that a German, left to himself, finds himself completely at a loss. Before he can laugh, think, or amuse



himself, even before he can grieve, he requires an outside impulse, the watchword impersonally received.

There was once such a people in history; and we are not referring to the Egyptians. This was the Peruvian people. Never has "statism" prevailed so completely as in the privileged country which extended from the Equator to the desert of Atucama.

There the individual was nothing, and the Inca, the concrete representation of the State, was everything, above opposition. Individual property—we read in Prescott—had disappeared. Even the affections almost belonged to the Son of the Sun and his ministers of every rank. A laborious and obedient ant, the Peruvian resigned himself to work, to love, to hate and to die according to the wishes of the caste which had established this order of things.

And a handful of adventurers, having unexpectedly penetrated to the heart of this monstrous empire, took possession of it in an afternoon. It was enough to wound the colossus in his vital nerve; to imprison the Inca, and to put his courtiers—that is, the members of the dominant, ruling caste—to the sword.

If it had been possible for the Allies to attack Germany at her hierarchical summit, we should have seen all the workings of that enormous machine, the Teutonic Empire, paralyzed then and there. For the Peruvians and the Incas live to-day not on the slopes of the Andes, but between the Oder and the Rhine.

Corporal punishments! How should the unhappy prisoners in the camps through which Torras passed escape them, if every German is accustomed to be struck, and secretly considers that there can be no real authority if this authority does not show itself

ready with the lash? How well Frederic the Great knew his people! "The whole secret is this," he used to say: "the Prussian soldier must fear his officer more than he fears the enemy." The valour of a serf, a galley-slave, a convict. . . . How far is this gloomy and ignominious courage from the brilliant heroism of the French or the conscious and whimsical calmness of the Briton!

## VII

In Torras's narrative there is one episode which deserves the honour of impartial and analytical consideration. We refer to the incident of the soldiers from Lyons.

The commandant of the prisoners' camp at Gross-Poritsch knew, from the register, that there were many natives of Lyons and the surrounding district among the French prisoners, and he invented a plan to torment them, to offend them basely, by insulting their wives and sisters.

So, on the notice-board on which the lying telegrams of the Wolff Agency were daily exhibited—accounts of victories by sea, on land, and in the air—he caused a vile document to be displayed.

In this it was stated—and this garbage was attributed to an imaginary correspondent in Berne—that the police of Lyons had imprisoned hundreds of reservists' wives, as they were causing innumerable scandals with their temporary lovers, who were selected by preference from among the most odorous of the Moroccan, Annamite, and Senegalese troops.

This incident permits us to plumb the obscurities

of German "corporalism." Let us make the attempt :—

The commandant of a prisoners' camp is an old soldier, a colonel, a major, or a brigadier-general. He has under his orders some hundreds of soldiers. The authorities rely upon his years and his energy.

Very well. This officer did not hesitate to descend to the vileness of calumny, and this calumny was directed against thousands of most respectable women. And the first to hear it were the fathers, husbands, brothers and lovers of the women thus calumniated.

Ah ! But these fathers, husbands, brothers and lovers were prisoners, wearing a symbolic armlet. Many were wounded, and once they were convalescent they swelled the ranks of their captive comrades. They could not resent the insult ; could not turn upon those who insulted them. The blood boiled in their veins. Anger clouded their eyes. The fever of impotent despair hammered in their temples.

But what could they do ? They broke the offending notice-board ; they tore up the placard ; they shouted, they cursed. . . . But they had no weapons, and their guardians had Mauser rifles.

The exploit of this German officer is as worthy as would be that of a coward who, seeing a valiant enemy in chains, should spit in his face. Is there in Spain, the land of *hidalgos*, as we are fond of proclaiming, any one who will defend the act of this Teutonic warrior ?

But let us examine the psychological process which must have been the corollary of the infamous act which we are discussing. This officer, probably, had read the news somewhere. The Wolff Agency

invents enormities of a truly extraordinary calibre. We recollect the slaughter of 3000 Egyptian children in the streets of Cairo by British troops. We recollect the sack of Salonika by the French, and the violation of Greek girls by British soldiers—lies dispatched from Nauen to the Germanophile Press of the whole world, and which certain Spanish dailies—more shame to them!—reproduce without embarrassment, and even with satisfaction.

The credulity of the German public is amazing. And as its Government knows this, it has fed it, spiritually, since the beginning of the war, with a daily ration of monstrous inexactitudes—military, political, economic, or simply informative—which save it the trouble of thinking. Wolff and the newspapers of all shades of opinion provide the German citizen with his ideas, and the supply is the least admirable possible. So it may be affirmed that the commandant of the Gross-Poritsch camp read the apocryphal telegram from Berne in some newspaper of Zittau or Dresden. And having read it, he remembered that among the prisoners entrusted to his care there were many natives of Lyons.

Did this old soldier believe the invention? It is probable that he did. The topic of French degeneration and corruption has been extensively exploited in Germany. They believed in good faith across the Rhine that France was suffering a process of disintegration, and that she was like a decayed corpse, which would crumble to pieces at the least touch. How many times may the perversity of the Frenchman have been the subject of conversation in the officers' mess which this commandant has frequented!

And as, moreover, an unhealthy literature and

drama had long sought their argument in adultery, the legend of the Frenchman, the enemy of the home, incapable of fidelity or simple affection, had played havoc with the superficial minds of Europe and America. There is nothing more dangerous and more enduring than the fixed idea. The fixed idea is accepted without discussion, and it strikes its roots deep in the brain. To remove it very often requires a painful operation. . . .

Let us admit, therefore, that the German commandant of whom we are speaking had read the telegram and had reproduced it exactly.

A man of decent feeling, of any delicacy or nobility, would never for a moment have dreamed of insulting the misfortune of his prisoners.

Supposing that such a man had believed that the women of Lyons were capable of taking black or yellow lovers while their husbands were fighting for their country—and only a mind anchylosed by long years of mechanical life and a brutalizing environment would admit such an absurdity—never could he have dreamed of tormenting a handful of unhappy soldiers, deprived of their liberty, with the publication of their conjugal misfortunes.

If we take the most favourable view of the case, the action of the commandant of Gross-Poritsch remains one of the meanest and most unworthy actions which the history of the war will record.

And if, contrary to our belief, he was the inventor of the vile fable . . .

Then . . . Think of the supplementary torments which the thousands of men condemned to live beneath his yoke will have suffered. . . .

And what are we to say of a country which

entrusts to persons of this mental and moral category posts so difficult as that of director of a community of war-prisoners? Here we have a charge which requires a tact and a delicacy of feeling by no means common. Germany has found no one to rule her prisoners' camps but gentry such as Torras describes in his narrative !

### VIII

Godmothers. . . . The French and Belgian soldiers who have no families have godmothers, and this admirable institution has been extended even to those haunts of horror where thousands of the soldiers of France and Belgium endure a living death, the prisoners of the implacable enemy.

Torras was succoured by two of these godmothers.

We do not know these ladies, but their letters tell us more than enough of their idealism and even of their character to enable us to form a mental image of them.

Mlle. Cœurdacier, of Billancourt, writes to her godson with her soul in her pen; it does not matter that he is not her fellow-countryman; he is a human being who is suffering, the victim of injustice. And she comforts and encourages him and sends him provisions.

Torras, in his barrack, received these words of compassionate kindness and these packets of provisions, which liberated him for some days from the camp rations, with unspeakable delight. A ray of sunlight had plumbed the depths of his bitterness. Torras, a strong man, felt the tears rise to his eyes. Ah, so all was not violence, persecution, and fraud !

So there were beautiful and generous souls who sought to mitigate suffering by their written words!

It may be that Mlle. Cœurducier has seen her happiness destroyed by the conflagration which is ravaging the world. Perhaps her affections were wounded by the bullet which cut short a life. . . . Her letter is admirable; it has the merit of being *felt*. From heart to heart flies the winged messenger of pity. But before one can be pitiful it is often needful to have suffered.

Very different is the style of Mlle. Lopes's letter. Mlle. Lopes is an Algerian. She is of Spanish descent, but has Gallicized her name. She tells her godson of the beautiful skies of Africa, of the spring, which is a resurrection. She reminds him of brighter and fairer days. This is a very discreet method of giving hope and comfort. Why add bitter thoughts to those which already darken the captive's dismal nights?

Undoubtedly, as the English poet says, the greatest of sorrows is that of remembering happy days in the blackest misery.

But Torras, an energetic man, is waiting for liberation. Brighter morrows are in store for him. Once again he will be free in body and in mind.

In Algeria a resplendent sun shines in the height of the unpolluted heavens. In the soul of Torras the bells of illusion chime with a silver voice.

## IX

Finally Torras was set at liberty; but his last days in Germany were envenomed by severities of every kind—fresh vigilance, fresh imprisonment,



threats and sudden shocks of fear. . . . The German State could not resign itself to releasing its prisoner.

But in the end Torras left Munich, the last halting-place on his journey to Switzerland. Before this, when he was travelling to Dresden, he was enabled to gauge the effect of white French bread upon the burgesses of Saxony. First they were furious with Torras; then with their Government. What? How was it that France, the France they had destroyed, was able to feed those Frenchmen who were prisoners of war in Germany, and to send them daily parcels of tinned meats, bread, and chocolate? How many times had these citizens read in their newspapers that the Allies, too, were blockaded by the Kaiser's submarines, so that they had consoled themselves for their privations by thinking of those of the enemy! And here the legend was exploded—here the truth was revealed to them, but in the most roundabout manner! In the prisoners' camps there was white bread, meat, sugar, coffee. . . . The Quadruple Entente, mistress of the seas, was performing the miracle of depriving their Central European enemies of food and of demoralizing the starving multitudes by the spectacle of its abundance, which enabled it to dispense the French, English and Belgian troops captured by the armies of Wilhelm II from the necessity of consuming K.K. bread and suet broth.

But the great revelation was in store for Torras on the last day of his sojourn in Germany. Some soldiers who were returning to the firing-line after leave entered his compartment. First they gazed at him in envy. They believed him an invalided Frenchman; they thought, probably, that this enemy was returning to the comforts of family life. But



when they understood that he was a Spaniard their tongues were unloosed.

Torras, in amazement, heard strange news from their lips. Spain was indemnifying the Central Empires for their disappointments in respect of their alliances. They had hopes in Germany that Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, the United States and Roumania would declare themselves, if only platonically, in support of the Austro-Germanic cause. And now the distant Peninsula had become an international centre of ardent Germanophilia. Latin and Occidental, Spain was yearning for the triumph of Germany. Her Catholicism had not involved her spiritual solidarity with Belgium. She was for the aggressors and against the victims of aggression. She was for the executioners and against the victims. What could she gain were the Central Empires to win? Absolutely nothing. She would even lose a great deal. But Don Quixote had couched his lance, and was charging furiously down upon the damsels, the orphans, and the helpless whom the *devoirs* of knight-errantry bade him succour and protect. He was no undoer of injuries here. He was about to strike the injured from behind, and place himself at the service of the ill-doers, knowing that he was committing an evil action.

Torras could not believe what they were saying. Spain Germanophile! More Germanophile than Roumania, than Switzerland, than Sweden, than the United States, than Holland! . . . Why? Without a doubt they were mistaken. To him the idea appeared so absurd that he ended by contradicting it and changed the subject of conversation.

And this conversation taught him much concerning

the state of mind prevalent in Germany after two years of hostilities. His fellow-passengers were an advocate, a financier, and a drysalter. And none of these spoke of a victorious peace. They repeated the statements of Bethmann-Hollweg and the Wolff Agency. But what preoccupied them above all was the food problem. The drysalter asked why the pigs had been sacrificed. The others put their hope in Batocki, the food-dictator.

There was no boasting. The trenches had cured them of bombast. They had seen the harsh realities of war; those of the front and those of the interior. Yonder, in France, they had fought against a heroic enemy; and at home they had found poverty and suffering. To resist! To resist strenuously, so that the Quadruple Entente should grow weary of fighting, and accept an unconditional peace! . . . This was the one thought of these Germans, men of the middle class, who read, and belonged to a comparatively high social plane. Before an injured neutral instinct and the presence of a policeman set a curb upon their tongues. But the truth finally escaped them, and Torras was able to seize it naked, stripped of the veils of patriotic falsehood. The stupendous mystification had already been discovered and condemned by the minority. Even the great mass of the people, sacrificed, bled, and dieted, was growing restless and demanding compensation. The orators who spoke of moderation were being stoned. But these outbreaks of fury betrayed the beginnings of disintegration and debility. The rebellious of to-day will be the destroyers of to-morrow.

## X

Torras reached Lyons. And he obtained permission to visit a camp of German prisoners.

With his experience as a veteran captive, he questioned, observed, and compared, and the results of his queries, observations, and comparisons is condensed in a single phrase: What a difference!

Yes. France and Germany are very different. Different in their racial characteristics, their historical traditions, their political systems. In France there is no all-absorbing and monopolizing "statism," though there is an administrative centralism which unites and knits the body of the nation. There is no "corporalism" impregnated with the spirit of the ruling caste. The masses of the people do not display the psychology of the herd. Obedience is not blind. The individual retains his full autonomy. Organization is the result of covenant, not of brutal imposition by an *élite* which proclaims itself the ruling caste. Democracy, the regimen of courteous distrust, has reached the profoundest depths. The love of decorations is in substance a proof that citizenship is based upon equality.

France is symbolized by the Lyons camp as was Germany by that of Zossen. Victorious, she extends to the vanquished a compassionate hand. She does not outrage the man because he has been her enemy. She sees in him a human being deserving of elementary respect. She nourishes him, clothes him and lodges him without in any way differentiating between him and her own defenders. It is her way.

But there is something more than shelter and

clothing and food. There is charity, kindness, delicacy of behaviour. To beat a prisoner! To insult him! To aggravate his position by malevolent inventions! . . . To descend to such baseness as this one must have lived many years in an atmosphere of iron hierarchy, such as kills personality; one must have been deformed at school by the schoolmaster and in the barracks by the *feldwebel*; one must have grown accustomed to accept the box on the ear, the kick, and words of blasphemous abuse without protesting.

In all iniquity there is previous degradation. One requires a moral preparation before one can outrage suppliant misfortune. And this moral preparation is in Germany, as it were, the flywheel of the State machine, while in France it is impossible, because it would be useless.

France is Latin, and by that very fact she is exalted, cosmopolitan, generous.

The favours of fortune appeared to have softened her. Many considered her decadent. But no one had ever dared to regard her, as a nation, capable of a collective act of baseness.

Beyond the Rhine, on the other hand, the greatness of the Whole had been built up with the cement of individual belittlement. It was forgotten that when the human cells suffer, the organism composed of them does not respond to the general law of progress, which strives for the attainment of the greatest possible sum of happiness for each individual. With the cement of barrack suicides, ultra-specialization such as kills initiative, and political absolutism, the Germans have built up *Kultur*: that is to say, an anti-civilization which a few centuries hence will be

studied by the historians with amazement. Mechanism, banishing from Germany all that opposed it, has resulted in scientific savagery. Material progress, the auxiliary of moral progress, produced beyond the Rhine and the Vosges the surprising result of an accumulation of monsters.

The Germany of Zossen, Chemnitz and Gross-Poritsch is, given the Imperial efforts and the influence of federal Prussianism—violent and fallacious—the only Germany possible to-day.

THE END

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